

LE MANS

MONACO GP

INDY 500

AUTOSPORT

LE MANS 2025

CAN FERRARI WIN AGAIN?



PLUS

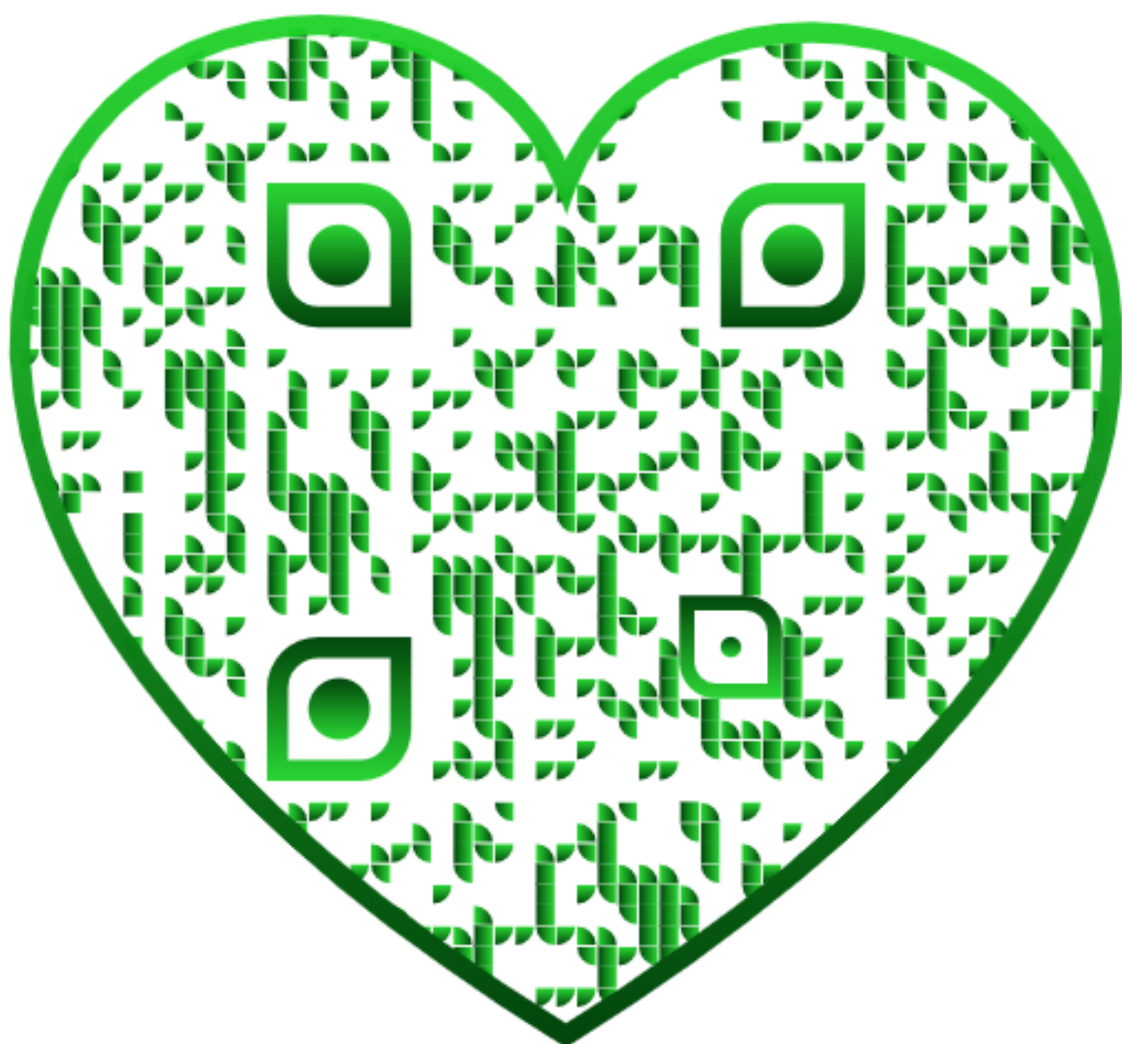
MONACO GP AND
INDY 500 ACTION

FERRARI'S F1 WOES AND
RED BULL'S RECOVERY

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Norris held his nerve to win a bizarre Monaco GP in the first of motorsport's Big Three. Can Ferrari take Le Mans?



GUIDO/GETTY IMAGES

A Monaco miss; now for Le Mans

The Monaco Grand Prix, Indianapolis 500 and Le Mans 24 Hours. It's that ridiculous time of year when the three biggest racing events in the world take place close together and all three feature in this month's issue.

It's somewhat ironic that, following several weekends during which he made small mistakes that proved costly, Lando Norris nailed things at the circuit that punishes errors more than anywhere else on the Formula 1 calendar. The two-stop rule certainly made for a *different* Monte Carlo contest, but further work is required to make it a little less random (see page 12).

We've got special debriefs on both the Monaco GP and the Indy 500 (p66), which current IndyCar dominator Alex Palou

added to his CV to underline his status as a modern legend of American motorsport, as well as the other key motorsport action and highlights of the past month. Who will be running the sport in the years to come is also a current topic of debate, so we look at the murky world of the FIA presidential election (p48).

And we're looking ahead to the other Big One: Le Mans. Despite its struggles in F1 (which Jake Boxall-Legge explores on p30) and near-miss in Monaco, Ferrari heads to the French endurance classic as a reluctant favourite. It has to, given its tally of three out of three from the 2025 World Endurance Championship rounds so far and the fact that the 499P has yet to be beaten around the high-speed Circuit de la Sarthe.

Gary Watkins is your guide in our Le Mans preview, which starts on p86 and runs through all the major Hypercar players, talks to the class-winning Brits now gunning for overall success, hears from Wayne Taylor Racing about how it is preparing for its first Le Mans, and picks out the key storylines to look out for.

While Norris and Ferrari's James Calado remain very much in contention for their world crowns, another Briton currently leads the way in his discipline. Elfyn Evans has been close to World Rally Championship success before and the 2025 season has been the Welshman's best start to a title tilt so far. We speak to him and his Toyota engineer about what's changed – and what's stayed the same – in this month's rallying feature on p124.

The UK motorsport season is now fully under way and our first 2025 edition of the Autosport National Rankings shows who's been banging in the wins early in the campaign (p149). Sadly, two deaths on the same day marred the weekend of 24-25 May and reminded everyone that motorsport can still be dangerous – and that safety must remain a priority (p144).



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Lando's ups and downs

The McLaren MCL39 of Lando Norris takes to the air, kerb-hopping at the Imola circuit's Curva Gresini during qualifying for the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix. The Briton's initial three-way fight for pole position with team-mate Oscar Piastri and Max Verstappen in an increasingly

well-fettled Red Bull (see page 38) fizzled out in Q3 as he was bumped into fourth place by Mercedes' George Russell with a last-gasp push. Norris later lamented his drop-off in pace in characteristically candid self-critical style: "It was good until the final two laps... Not quick enough –

that's all. The lap time doesn't come. Same answer as every weekend, it's a regular thing. I need to work on it a lot, it's just not good enough." There was some solace to be salvaged the next day as Norris deposed Piastri to finish runner-up behind a seemingly uncatchable Verstappen (p10).



Photographer Lars Baron/
Getty Images

Where Imola, Italy

When Saturday 17 May 2025

Details Canon EOS R1,
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Piastri sitting pretty at top of the points table after three wins on the trot

BAGNAL/SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 1

PIASTRI COMPLETES HAT-TRICK IN MIAMI AS HAMILTON FUMES OVER ORDERS

Every time Miami Grand Prix president Tyler Epp speaks to the media, he chuckles when asked whether his initial wariness of introducing a sprint race to the weekend was something he now regrets. In fact, as he told Autosport: “I couldn’t have been more wrong,” after the added spectacle helped bring increased footfall through the gates at Miami Gardens.

The 2025 edition was further proof of Epp’s initial pessimistic outlook on sprint races being misplaced, and set a high bar for the remainder of the weekend. Firstly, there were joyous scenes at Mercedes on the Friday when Andrea Kimi Antonelli became the youngest polesitter in any format of world championship Formula 1, putting in a stunning lap to keep the McLarens at bay.

Antonelli was unable to convert it into a first F1 win in a sprint race that was delayed by nearly half an hour due to heavy rain that had already led to the F1 Academy race being abandoned. Instead, it was Lando Norris who took the maximum eight points on offer to give a much needed shot in the arm for his title ambitions.

With the sprint reduced from 19 to 18 laps due to the adverse weather, two of which were run behind the safety car due to poor visibility, the second McLaren of championship leader

Oscar Piastri lunged down the inside into Turn 1 and Antonelli went off the track, dropping to fourth behind Norris and the ever-lurking Max Verstappen.

Piastri controlled the race in relative comfort, taking care of his intermediate tyres while a dry racing line slowly emerged, with Norris starting to move within striking distance as the pair scampered clear of Verstappen’s Red Bull.

As the track continued to dry, Verstappen and Antonelli both pitted for slicks on lap 13, but the pair came to blows when the world champion was released unsafely into the path of the polesitter. Verstappen caught damage on his

front wing and was hit with a 10-second penalty, while Antonelli was forced to drive through without stopping in his box.

Lewis Hamilton’s searing soft-tyre pace also forced the McLarens to react by pitting for medium tyres, while a Fernando Alonso crash after contact with Liam Lawson caused a safety car that allowed Norris, who emerged from the pits ahead of his team-mate thanks to the pack’s reduced speed, to take the win.

With all the chaos and delays in the sprint, qualifying for the grand prix proper was delayed by 15 minutes and ultimately featured a reversal of fortunes for Verstappen, who had missed media duties in Miami on the Thursday due to becoming a father for the first time. Verstappen claimed his 43rd career pole by 0.065s over Norris, with Antonelli impressing once again by keeping Piastri behind for third on the grid.

In Q3, Verstappen drew first blood with a lap of 1m26.492s, just thousandths ahead of Norris and Piastri, which had more to do with neither McLaren driver finding gains rather than any Verstappen heroics. But Verstappen then did sprinkle in some magic to find the fastest time across the session, a 1m26.204s, which was enough to fend off a late improvement by Norris, who appeared to lose his pole shot by bouncing over the inside kerb in the final corner.

Verstappen said his pole had “thrown out of the window” any “silly” suggestions that the arrival of baby Lily would slow him down. “I think there are enough racing drivers in the past that have been world champion even after having kids,” pointed out the Red Bull man. “So honestly, I don’t even know where that comes from.”

But there would be no podium champagne to wet the baby’s head. McLaren was on song once again come the GP, Piastri this time leading home Norris to extend his gap at the championship summit.

Piastri took the lead with a move on Verstappen on lap 14 of 57, Norris also passing the struggling Red Bull to salvage second after losing out at the beginning. Norris had started



Hamilton vented frustration in terse radio exchanges

HONE/GETTY IMAGES



RESULTS ROUND 6/24

MIAMI INTERNATIONAL
AUTODROME 04.05.25 / 57 LAPS



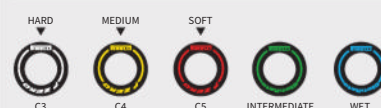
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GRID
1	Oscar Piastri McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	1h28m51.587s	4
2	Lando Norris McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+4.630s	2
3	George Russell Mercedes F1 W16	+37.644s	5
4	Max Verstappen Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+39.956s	1
5	Alexander Albon Williams-Mercedes FW47	+48.067s	7
6	Andrea Kimi Antonelli Mercedes F1 W16	+55.502s	3
7	Charles Leclerc Ferrari SF-25	+57.036s	8
8	Lewis Hamilton Ferrari SF-25	+1m00.186s	12
9	Carlos Sainz Williams-Mercedes FW47	+1m00.577s	6
10	Yuki Tsunoda Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+1m14.434s	10
11	Isack Hadjar Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+1m14.602s	11
12	Esteban Ocon Haas-Ferrari VF-25	+1m22.006s	9
13	Pierre Gasly Alpine-Renault A525	+1m30.445s	20
14	Nico Hulkenberg Sauber-Ferrari C45	-1 lap/+1.155s	16
15	Fernando Alonso Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	-1 lap/+20.979s	17
16	Lance Stroll Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	-1 lap/+25.162s	18
R	Liam Lawson Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	36 laps/acc damage	15
R	Gabriel Bortoleto Sauber-Ferrari C45	30 laps/fuel system	13
R	Ollie Bearman Haas-Ferrari VF-25	27 laps/power unit	19
R	Jack Doohan Alpine-Renault A525	0 laps/accident	14

FASTEST LAP Norris 1m29.746s (134.895mph)

F1 SPRINT 18 LAPS (GRID)

1 Norris (3); 2 Piastri (2); 3 Hamilton (7); 4 Russell (5); 5 Stroll (16); 6 Tsunoda (20); 7 Antonelli (1); 8 Gasly (13); 9 Hulkenberg (11); 10 Hadjar (9)

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Piastri 131; 2 Norris 115; 3 Verstappen 99; 4 Russell 93; 5 Leclerc 53; 6 Antonelli 48; 7 Hamilton 41; 8 Albon 30; 9 Ocon 14; 10 Stroll 14.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 McLaren 246; 2 Mercedes 141; 3 Red Bull 105; 4 Ferrari 94; 5 Williams 37; 6 Haas 20; 7 Aston Martin 14; 8 Racing Bulls 8; 9 Alpine 7; 10 Sauber 6.

alongside Verstappen and took the inside into Turn 1, but the Red Bull held firm and nudged him into the inside Turn 3 run-off, which dropped the Briton back to sixth. "He forced me off, what am I going to do, drive into the wall? I was completely alongside," Norris complained, but it fell on deaf ears in the stewards' room.

Further back, Jack Doohan's first shot at an F1 career came to a premature end after first-lap contact with Liam Lawson forced the Alpine driver to retire and news filtered through just hours later that he would be replaced by Franco Colapinto (see p21). It was also team principal Oliver Oakes's last outing at Alpine before he, too, unceremoniously departed (p20).

Piastri started hounding Verstappen for the lead soon enough and got the job done into Turn 1, thanks to being patient around the outside and thereby forcing Verstappen into a mistake, locking the front tyres. Their battle allowed Norris to close up and he also got past Verstappen, albeit having made heavy weather of it compared to Piastri – on lap 18 Norris initially passed in Turn 7, but both cars were forced off and he handed the position back.

One lap later, Norris sealed the move much earlier on the straight and swiftly dropped Verstappen as the Red Bull struggled with tyre wear. Norris embarked on a chase of Piastri, before a virtual safety car was called following Ollie Bearman's retirement and handed those yet to stop with a time advantage as they dived into the pits.

A quicker stop meant the Mercedes of

George Russell jumped Verstappen and Antonelli for third, where he would stay to join Piastri and Norris on the podium. Verstappen had to settle for fourth, while Williams's improving season continued with Alex Albon securing fifth ahead of Antonelli and the Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and Hamilton in seventh and eighth respectively.

It was a poor race for the Prancing Horse, compounded by terse radio messages from Hamilton, who grew increasingly frustrated at the team's indecision in whether to call for Leclerc to let him through.

"We want to keep the DRS to Charles," reported Hamilton's race engineer Riccardo Adami. Hamilton was undeterred, though, and he retorted: "You want me to sit here for the whole race? This is not good teamwork, that's all I'm gonna say."

Eventually, Leclerc did let Hamilton through for seventh, but not before the seven-time world champion hit out once again: "In China I got out the way." And once he had been informed that the cars would swap positions, he added: "Have a tea break while you're at it."

After failing to close the gap to Antonelli, Hamilton ceded the place back to Leclerc. His comments were played down by Ferrari team boss Fred Vasseur after the race: "I had a discussion with Lewis, and I can perfectly understand the frustration. They are champions. They want to win races. We are asking them to let their team-mates go. It's not easy. It's never easy." Just a storm in a teacup, perhaps?

MARK MANN-BRYANS



Verstappen mugs polesitter Piastri at the start in spectacular fashion

GETTY IMAGES / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

FORMULA 1

MAX AUDACITY AND RED BULL UPGRADES HUMBLE McLAREN

"I think even if we'd started on pole, Max was too quick for us," said Lando Norris after finishing second, 6.109 seconds adrift of Max Verstappen in what may prove to be the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari's grand prix swansong.

Lando, as is the wont of racing drivers, was using the royal 'we', since his McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri *did* start from pole while Norris was fourth on the grid. Verstappen had qualified second, but this was not a race quite like Suzuka, where he snatched pole against the run of form and hung on to the lead in a processional race. Here his Red Bull had ample speed that left McLaren scrambling to keep up.

Verstappen had a slow initial getaway, while Piastri and third-placed George Russell got off the marks quickly – to the extent that, as the field reached the Tamburello, Piastri clearly regarded Russell as the greater threat. He covered the inside line and braked a fraction early, enabling Verstappen to launch up the outside and assert himself as they reached the apex. Piastri, knowing the corner was lost, allowed some room and tried to come back at the Red Bull as the chicane filtered right, but an oversteer twitch put paid to that. Cynics observed that if the roles had been reversed, Verstappen would simply have released the brake and run his rival off the track.

Verstappen left such mutterings fluttering in the dust and swiftly broke out of DRS range. Those conditioned by the order of race pace so far this season might still have thought Piastri was playing the long game – which was why, when he pitted to get off the medium Pirellis at

the end of lap 13 and emerged in hellish traffic, the assumption was that McLaren had made a tactical blunder. It actually had little choice: running in dirty air, Piastri was killing the medium-compound Pirellis and declared himself open to the option of an early pitstop, even though the popular expectation was that this would be a one-stop race.

"At the time Oscar's tyres were going off by a good chunk," said McLaren team principal Andrea Stella. "It was unclear entering this event whether it would have been a one or a two. If it was a two, that was the time to go."

It wasn't a quick stop but even if it had been, Piastri would still have emerged in traffic. Meanwhile, Norris had taken 11 laps to get past Russell's Mercedes, leaving him 10s behind the leader.

"The key for us is free air and going long," race engineer Will Joseph told Norris – but he never

got close to making it look like an offset strategy would work, since the gap between him and the leader hovered stubbornly around the 10s mark. Nor could Norris go longer than Verstappen, for he pitted at the end of lap 28. Serendipitously for Red Bull, Esteban Ocon's Haas chose that moment to expire as he exited Tosa, and stutter to a halt on the grass. Race control opted to cover its removal with a virtual safety car, which was to prove the undoing of the majority of the drivers who had pitted in the laps immediately prior.

Verstappen therefore got an inexpensive pitstop at the end of lap 29, emerging with double the gap to Norris he'd previously enjoyed. But the focus should not be on Red Bull striking it lucky in terms of pitstop timing, but in the absence of McLaren's usual advantage in tyre management.

McLaren took advantage of the VSC to bring Piastri in for another stop, since he had a second new set of hard tyres available – Norris didn't –



Piastri didn't make it easy for fresher-tyred Norris to pass

BARON/GETTY IMAGES

RESULTS ROUND 7/24

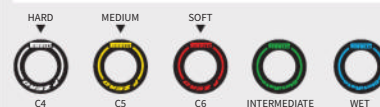
AUTODROMO INTERNAZIONALE ENZO E DINO FERRARI
18.05.25 / 63 LAPS



POS	DRIVER	TIME	GRID
1	Max Verstappen Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	1h31m33.199s	2
2	Lando Norris McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+6.109s	4
3	Oscar Piastri McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+12.956s	1
4	Lewis Hamilton Ferrari SF-25	+14.356s	12
5	Alexander Albon Williams-Mercedes FW47	+17.945s	7
6	Charles Leclerc Ferrari SF-25	+20.774s	11
7	George Russell Mercedes F1 W16	+22.034s	3
8	Carlos Sainz Williams-Mercedes FW47	+22.898s	6
9	Isack Hadjar Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+23.586s	9
10	Yuki Tsunoda Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+26.446s	20
11	Fernando Alonso Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	+27.250s	5
12	Nico Hulkenberg Sauber-Ferrari C45	+30.296s	17
13	Pierre Gasly Alpine-Renault A525	+31.424s	10
14	Liam Lawson Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	+32.511s	15
15	Lance Stroll Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	+32.993s	8
16	Franco Colapinto Alpine-Renault A525	+33.411s	16
17	Ollie Bearman Haas-Ferrari VF-25	+33.808s	19
18	Gabriel Bortoleto Sauber-Ferrari C45	+38.572s	14
R	Andrea Kimi Antonelli 44 laps/throttle Mercedes F1 W16		13
R	Esteban Ocon 27 laps/engine Haas-Ferrari VF-25		18

FASTEST LAP Verstappen 1m17.988s (140.805mph)

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Piastri 146; 2 Norris 133; 3 Verstappen 124;
4 Russell 99; 5 Leclerc 61; 6 Hamilton 53; 7 Antonelli 48;
8 Albon 40; 9 Ocon 14; 10 Stroll 14; 11 Sainz 11;
12 Tsunoda 10; 13 Gasly 7; 14 Hadjar 7; 15 Hulkenberg 6;
16 Bearman 6; 17 Alonso 0; 18 Lawson 0;
19 Doohan 0; 20 Bortoleto 0; 21 Colapinto 0.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 McLaren 279; 2 Mercedes 147; 3 Red Bull 131;
4 Ferrari 114; 5 Williams 51; 6 Haas 20; 7 Aston Martin 14;
8 Racing Bulls 10; 9 Alpine 7; 10 Sauber 6.

and the drivers he'd recently overtaken (Ollie Bearman, Yuki Tsunoda, Lewis Hamilton, Nico Hulkenberg, Kimi Antonelli and Isack Hadjar) had all pitted too, so he stayed in a net fourth place. That became third at the beginning of lap 40 when he passed Alex Albon's Williams under DRS.

Five laps later Antonelli's Mercedes succumbed to a throttle problem, also at Tosa, and this required a full safety car to be deployed because there is only room for one car in the gap behind the barriers there – and that was still occupied by Ocon's Haas. So while the earlier VSC period had lasted just three laps, here Bernd Maylander controlled the pace for eight.

Red Bull took advantage of the opportunity for another cheap pitstop since Verstappen had enough in hand over Piastri to come out ahead, and Norris was insistent that he pit too, since he felt he would enjoy a tyre offset, certainly to his team-mate. The difference here was that Verstappen had another new set of hards available, while the ones Norris swapped to had already seen service earlier in the weekend.

That set up a fascinating run to the flag and nervy moments for the McLaren pitwall as Verstappen took off again on the green flag and Piastri and Norris squabbled over second place, after Norris had emerged behind his team-mate. With Piastri on 18-lap-old hard tyres and Norris on younger ones it was an unequal battle, but still Piastri defended with all his might for four laps before Norris went round the outside into Tamburello. Piastri just left him enough room.

At this point the gap between Verstappen and his pursuers was 5.4s, and Norris never seriously looked like eroding it over the final five laps – indeed, it grew a little. The reversal from Friday had been spectacular. There, Verstappen had complained about being overtaken by the McLarens while they were on their race simulations. "We tried a lot of bits, some worked better than others but, yeah, overall not fast enough at the moment," was Verstappen's take.

In this sentiment he was echoed by Red Bull 'driver advisor' Helmut Marko, who described

Friday's performance as "disappointing", given the team had introduced a new sidepod and engine cover configuration to complement the revised floor added in Miami. "The fact remains that McLaren is absolutely superior," he said.

It didn't pan out that way on Sunday because, with a little bit of fettling, Red Bull found a 'sweet spot'. It has admitted its recent updates have not been in pursuit of peak downforce but in making the RB21 more benign. Imola's fast, flowing nature has some similarity to the likes of Suzuka, where Red Bull's car had demonstrated it has ample downforce. Here also, despite the warm conditions, the tyres weren't suffering the kind of thermal degradation McLaren is able to manage so well – another benefit to Red Bull.

It is, as Red Bull technical director Pierre Wache observed, a question of one or two millimetres here or there on set-up that can help get the car 'in the window'. "It looks like clearly the wear and the surface of the tyre were completely different than what we saw on Friday," he said. "The set-up improved a lot. And I think the new package gives the opportunity to improve even more."

"If the hard tyres had behaved just a little bit better," said Stella, "then the two [stop] would have been a very strong strategy. But once he [Piastri] went on hard tyres, actually it wasn't much faster than Lando and Max who stayed out on the used medium. So I think the hard tyres were a little less competitive than we thought, but we needed to deviate and create the condition to beat Max today. This is something that you can only judge in hindsight.

"We attempted to unlock various scenarios to try and beat Max, but at no stage did we have enough race pace. Even with the final safety car, Lando could pass Oscar and try to push as much as possible – and pretty much Max was responding to Lando. Here to overtake you need seven, eight tenths of a second [advantage over the car in front]. The main factor remains the swap of position and the outcome of lap one."

STUART CODLING



Verstappen win topped off a hugely impressive turnaround



CANON/PRO/LIGHTROCKET



FORMULA 1

NORRIS BACK ON TRACK AS MONACO TWO-STOP PLAN FALLS FLAT

PHOTOGRAPHY **GETTY IMAGES**



Norris managed the race from the front, albeit unspectacularly

The more things change, the more they stay the same. The Monaco Grand Prix had more than one 'first' this year but, as it turns out, introducing a title sponsor in TAG Heuer had about as much impact on improving the racing spectacle as the rule to bring in two mandatory pitstops.

Whatever gimmicks are dreamed up in an attempt to manufacture something resembling an entertaining Formula 1 race around Monte

Carlo, while the current track layout remains the way it is then qualifying will be king.

And lo, it was Lando Norris who sealed pole position with the fastest lap the streets of Monte Carlo have ever seen, the McLaren tearing past the yachts to post a time of under 80 seconds and usurp local favourite and Monaco maestro Charles Leclerc.

In previous years that might as well have been

worth 25 points in the championship but, in the brave new world of 2025, the complete unknown of an enforced two-stop race meant we were surely open to a Sunday resembling something more than a procession of peak engineering in front of wealthy onlookers. But for all the pre-race speculation over strategy and safety cars, red flags and regulations, Monaco is currently incapable of producing anything >>



BARSALL/NURPHOTO

other than a damp squib.

Norris took the win, and could even afford to lock up into Ste Devote on the opening lap and still lead the way, the Briton keeping out of all the nonsense masquerading as grand prix racing behind him to seal a victory that clearly meant a lot to him, and one that also reinvigorates his title aspirations.

"I've been working hard over the past few months to get back to having that momentum I had in Australia, that confidence," he said. "What I felt this weekend was a small step forward, but it's not it. It's not like I've nailed it now and everything's back.

GOING BANANAS

"There are still things that I need to work on. There are still things that, as a team, them giving me the equipment – and I don't mean just making a quicker car, because the car's quick enough – but giving me the things I need from the car in order to excel and maximise results, and the differences from last year to this year."

Norris managed the race from the front in a manner belying some of his hiccups earlier in the season, albeit running at a pace that would not concern the curators of the Guinness Book of Records – sometimes four seconds per lap slower than cars running in free air towards the back.

Leclerc is the master of Monte Carlo and even he could do nothing about Norris in the closing

stages, despite Max Verstappen seemingly backing the McLaren into his path before ducking into the pits for his second mandated pitstop at the end of lap 77 of 78. At that point, Norris let rip – and set the fastest lap on the final tour to win by 3.1s.

The reigning world champion has a way with words and maybe summed up the experiment best when he likened the race to *Mario Kart*: "Maybe you can throw bananas around," he added, clearly not impressed by the results as he came home fourth behind championship leader Oscar Piastri.

The one thing the two-stop tactic allowed

was the chance for teams to set their strategists to work – the number crunchers avoiding all of the Saturday night parties to come up with the best way to tackle the tweaks. Pirelli head of motorsport Mario Isola said teams would require a "genius" rather than a strategist to work it all out – and it turns out the one team that seemingly had both was Racing Bulls.

This was the first team to adopt the tactic of the second car backing up the field to create a gap for the lead car to pit and return to the race in clean air. Isack Hadjar, who had started the race in fifth, was the beneficiary of the tactic, but Liam Lawson deserves credit for carrying



MORGES/NURPHOTO

Raceability of track severely limited by its topography... but what's new?



out his role perfectly, too.

It led to Hadjar finishing sixth, only jumped by Lewis Hamilton's Ferrari, and Lawson eighth on a fine afternoon in the Monegasque sunshine for the Red Bull junior operation.

A STROKE OF GENIUS

"You can see it – the whole team is gathered in front of the garage, they're absolutely thrilled for the team, for Isack, for Liam," Racing Bulls chief executive Peter Bayer said of the result. "Brilliant job by our strategists. We've had our share of frustrations with Laurent [Mekies,

team principal] over strategy but they really pulled off a stroke of genius. The bit of risk we took definitely paid off."

If Racing Bulls had a genius approach, the one employed later in the race by Williams felt more like the people at Mensa had come up with a way to truly expose the nonsense notion of Monaco being a competitive racing venue. Williams duo Carlos Sainz and Alex Albon took it in turns to back up the Mercedes pair behind them to such an extent that team principal James Vowles was apologetic to his rivals. Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff reached into his pocket during his post-race media briefing and pulled out his

phone to read a text exchange that he had with his Williams counterpart during the race.

The messages showed Vowles apologising to Wolff after his drivers backed up George Russell and Andrea Kimi Antonelli during the race. The pair are good friends; Vowles worked under Wolff at Mercedes before taking the top job at Williams, where he has already started to overhaul the team's fortunes, and Wolff understood it was nothing personal. "James is one of my guys, and I don't want to sound patronising because he's making a career as a team principal, and he's doing really well," acknowledged Wolff.

"He had to do it. You know, it's two cars in the points, and I think the way it started was these RBs that packed us back off, and that's what we had to do."

For their part, the Williams drivers – and Vowles – were unhappy that the rules led to such a tactic being employed. "It's great to walk away with points with both drivers and brilliant to watch Alex and Carlos execute really strong teamwork to achieve that," said Vowles, who had overseen four double-points finishes in a row.

"We need to review the rules and regulations for Monaco, because racing like this feels wrong and I want us to be racing on performance and merit, and we're not quite there yet."

Albon, who finished ninth, one place ahead of Sainz, admitted it was not the kind of afternoon he was hoping for: "It became more of a peloton >>



Williams felt need to apologise to Mercedes over delaying tactics

than a race. Painful, I think. Not how I want to go racing and I don't think enjoyable for anyone watching as well. We knew it was a possibility; we knew this strategy could happen, I think we were talking about it on Thursday.

"We didn't want it to happen, and I think on our side it wasn't how we were going to go racing. Once RB started it, basically it put us in a position where we had to do it as well. It bunched the field up so tightly, the only way to get out of that situation was to basically repeat what they did. Not pretty, and frustrating, but in the end it's a team sport and we maximised three points for the team."

Saturday qualifying, as is seemingly the case every year in Monaco, was where the action was to be found. The crowd roared for Leclerc taking pole at the death only for Norris to put in a better effort on the second flying lap of his final run, 1m09.954s versus 1m10.063s.

TAKING HIS PUNISHMENT

It was also where Mercedes' race was lost, Antonelli ending up in the barrier at the Nouvelle chicane to bring out a red flag at the end of Q1 meaning he would start 15th – and it transpired team-mate Russell would be just one place further up the order after an electrical issue meant he lost power at the start of Q2.

"Up in smoke" and "weekend over" were Russell's main takeaways on the Saturday evening and his glum outlook was proved to be accurate, his race ruined by the Williams pair to such an extent that he collected a drive-through penalty for cutting the Nouvelle chicane to pass Albon and then admitting to the crime over team radio.

The race stewards explained the penalty was doled out because they had ensured teams and drivers were aware ahead of

the grand prix that such moves would be treated more harshly than at other races.

"I've got to be honest; I didn't really care because I was out of the points," Russell explained. "I didn't get the chance yesterday [in qualifying] to enjoy Monaco. And I just said, 'Screw it, I want to enjoy Monaco. I want to enjoy driving this track full gas. It's one of the best circuits in the world.' And that's what I did."

"For all of the drivers, qualifying is the most exhilarating moment of the weekend. Do we accept that? There should be no race, and it's a qualifying race. You do one on Saturday, one on Sunday. The guy who qualifies pole gets some points and gets a little trophy, and the one on Sunday gets some more points."

"That's what we love most. I think that's what you guys enjoy watching the most. And 99% of the other people in Monaco are here sipping champagne on the yacht, so they don't really care..."

"Driving four seconds off the pace here is dead easy. You effectively can put an F2 car out there and they've got a chance of holding up an F1 car. I don't know what the solution is. We were lucky in 2022 and 2023 that the wet races offered some excitement."

Ahead of the race there were plenty of suggestions that some teams would opt to pit on lap one and again on lap two before running the hard tyres until the end of the race, keeping their fingers crossed that no safety car or red flag would emerge.

The lap one stop was used by some, most notably Yuki Tsunoda after qualifying 12th for Red Bull and also the Haas of Ollie Bearman, who was starting from the back after a 10-place grid drop – the most severe punishment since Pastor Maldonado at Monaco 13 years earlier – for a red flag infringement during free practice.

But it would not be the safety car or race restart

that would thwart any attempt to make the bold strategy pay off. Instead it was the backing up further ahead that put paid to the early stoppers progressing into the points.

Tsunoda was one of those to miss out, as Christian Horner explained: "Lap one initially looked like he would get, you know, a significant benefit from it, but then everybody started to drive extremely slowly, as they started to play around with the tactics. So, he was basically on the same set of tyres for the whole race and did his fastest laps at the end when he finally got some clear traffic. He was just sat in a queue the entire race. So, very, very difficult for him."

And so we get to the point where the Monaco Grand Prix malaise rumbles on for at least another year, so much so that it actually united Horner and Wolff, those old adversaries who would argue over whether the chicken or the egg came first – all while eating an omelette – just to spite each other.

A FAILED EXPERIMENT

"The fundamental problem is you cannot overtake here and you can drive around three, four seconds off the pace," sighed Horner. "But that's circuit specific, you know, we've known that for... it's been on the calendar for 72 years."

"I think it's the only way to really encourage any form of overtaking. I don't think I saw a single overtake in the race. So, trying to create a bit more braking areas, either on the exit of the tunnel or Turn 1. If there was any way of creating a longer braking zone somewhere we should really investigate it. The cars are so big now that you just don't have a chance to get alongside."

Meanwhile, Wolff summed it up arguably better than anyone else over the whole weekend: "We tried something. We tried an experiment with two-stop. Didn't change anything in the outcome."

"Does it improve the overtaking? I don't think that's feasible. We need to talk also with maybe ACM [Automobile Club de Monaco] here. Is there anything we can change on the layout? Difficult in a city. We are limited by a mountain and the sea."

All in all, the two-stop alteration did very little other than give the strategists migraines. Maybe in 2026, to paraphrase Sherlock Holmes, F1 will end up with a three-stop problem... Whatever is decided next, it needs to go some way to – as Hamilton succinctly put it when asked about the changes ahead of this year's race – "be better than the s**** we had last year".

MARK MANN-BRYANS



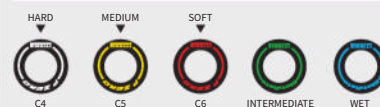
RESULTS ROUND 8/24

CIRCUIT DE MONACO
 25.05.25 / 78 LAPS


POS	DRIVER	TIME	GRID
1	Lando Norris McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	1h40m33.843s	1
2	Charles Leclerc Ferrari SF-25	+3.131s	2
3	Oscar Piastri McLaren-Mercedes MCL39	+3.658s	3
4	Max Verstappen Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	+20.572s	4
5	Lewis Hamilton Ferrari SF-25	+51.387s	7
6	Isack Hadjar Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	-1 lap/+1m05.082s	5
7	Esteban Ocon Haas-Ferrari VF-25	-1 lap/+1m06.029s	8
8	Liam Lawson Racing Bulls-Honda RBPT VCARB 02	-1 lap/+1m06.746s	9
9	Alexander Albon Williams-Mercedes FW47	-2 laps/+11.869s	10
10	Carlos Sainz Williams-Mercedes FW47	-2 laps/+15.232s	11
11	George Russell Mercedes F1 W16	-2 laps/+33.844s	14
12	Ollie Bearman Haas-Ferrari VF-25	-2 laps/+54.693s	20
13	Franco Colapinto Alpine-Renault A525	-2 laps/+57.114s	18
14	Gabriel Bortoleto -2 laps/+1m08.424s Saubert-Ferrari C45		16
15	Lance Stroll Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25	-2 laps/+1m10.395s	19
16	Nico Hulkenberg -2 laps/+1m11.544s Saubert-Ferrari C45		13
17	Yuki Tsunoda Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB21	-2 laps/+1m11.849s	12
18	Andrea Kimi Antonelli -3 laps/+8.409s Mercedes F1 W16		15
R	Fernando Alonso 36 laps/power unit Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR25		6
R	Pierre Gasly 7 laps/accident Alpine-Renault A525		17

FASTEST LAP Norris 1m13.221s (101.946mph)

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Piastri 161; 2 Norris 158; 3 Verstappen 136;
 4 Russell 99; 5 Leclerc 79; 6 Hamilton 63; 7 Antonelli
 48; 8 Albon 42; 9 Ocon 20; 10 Hadjar 15; 11 Stroll 14;
 12 Sainz 12; 13 Tsunoda 10; 14 Gasly 7; 15
 Hulkenberg 6; 16 Bearman 6; 17 Lawson 4; 18 Alonso
 0; 19 Doohan 0; 20 Colapinto 0; 21 Bortoleto 0.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 McLaren 319; 2 Mercedes 147; 3 Red Bull 143;
 4 Ferrari 142; 5 Williams 54; 6 Haas 26; 7 Racing
 Bulls 22; 8 Aston Martin 14; 9 Alpine 7; 10 Sauber 6.



Verstappen, here
 chasing Piastri, could
 not make the podium

MARTINI/SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET



He's a maestro on
 home turf, but Leclerc
 had to settle for second

THOMPSON



McLaren boss Zak
 Brown celebrates his
 drivers' 1-3 finish

BARSALI/NURPHOTO



GARY HAWKINS

OBITUARY

JOCHEN MASS 1946-2025

Jochen Mass was one of the top sportscar drivers of his generation. A total of 32 world championship victories and a Le Mans 24 Hours win are testament to that. But the German, who has died aged 78 following a stroke, never fulfilled his promise in Formula 1 nor, arguably, made the most of his three seasons at McLaren in its pomp.

Mass claimed a solitary win during his three and a bit years with the team from the end of 1974. The triumph came in tragic circumstances at the shortened 1975 Spanish Grand Prix at Montjuich Park in which four people were killed when Rolf Stommelen's Hill-Ford cleared the barriers after rear wing failure.

There was clearly an element of luck to the victory, which yielded

only half points because the race had not reached 60% distance. In fact, he shouldn't even have been racing. McLaren team manager Alastair Caldwell revealed that Mass had agreed to pull into the pits after a lap in a continuation of the protest that had raged through the event against safety levels at the circuit. That was before, explained Caldwell, "the red mist came down" as the flag fell.

Yet misfortune robbed Mass of a second victory aboard his McLaren-Cosworth M23 the following season at the Nurburgring. He and Caldwell made an inspired decision to start the last German GP on the Nordschleife on slick tyres when the rest of the field opted for wets.

Caldwell, who also engineered Mass's car, revealed that the

decision was made following a discussion with the driver of a course vehicle sent out after a shower in the lead-up to the race. "Everyone listened to what the driver of this super-duper Porsche that had been around the track had to say, and then decided on wets," remembers Caldwell.

"But Jochen and I went and had another word with him, and we decided that it sounded like only five kilometres [of a track measuring 22km, or 14 miles] or so were truly wet. We agreed that we should take a gamble on slicks.

"I remember Jochen telling me that at the Foxhole [Fuchsrohre] he only stayed on the road because other cars were banging wheels with him. By the end of the second lap, he had a massive lead before

the race was stopped. He was going to win that race by a mile because everyone else had to pit."

Mass's advantage was scrubbed out when the race was stopped after lap two following the crash that left Ferrari driver Niki Lauda with life-threatening injuries. Mass would go on to finish the restarted race in third, more than 50 seconds behind team-mate James Hunt.

The 1976 season appeared to be Mass's big chance. Hunt was the late replacement for Emerson Fittipaldi after his departure to the family team set up by brother Wilson, and still an unproven prospect, victory in the 1975 Dutch GP with Hesketh notwithstanding.

"I remember flying out to Sao Paulo for the first race at Interlagos and Jochen asking me on the plane who was number one driver," recalled Caldwell. "I told him that whoever is quickest is number one."

The die was cast when Hunt put his M23 on pole in Brazil and again second time out at Kyalami in South Africa. McLaren's de facto new number one would go on to claim the title while Mass sneaked into the top 10 in the points, twice scoring a best result of third.

Mass's F1 career spanned nine seasons and 105 starts, but yielded only eight podiums, including his win in Spain. He graduated to the big time in 1973 with Surtees with which he was a race winner in Formula 2 and, after leaving McLaren at the end of 1977, raced for ATS, Arrows and the RAM March team. He walked away from the last-named mid-season in 1982 after an aerial accident in the French GP at Paul Ricard from which he emerged unscathed.

That coincided with the start of the Group C era and the arrival of Porsche's 956. Mass was already an established race winner with the German manufacturer's Group 6 prototype (the 936) and its Group 5

“HE HAD A MASSIVE LEAD BEFORE THE RACE WAS STOPPED. HE WAS GOING TO WIN THAT RACE BY A MILE”

ALASTAIR CALDWELL

silhouette racer (the 935), and went on to become a stalwart of its campaigns with the 956 and its long-wheelbase cousin, the 962.

Mass claimed nine world championship victories with the 956/962 and 10 more after moving over to the Sauber Mercedes team for 1988. His victory in a Sauber-Mercedes C9 at Le Mans the following year with Manuel Reuter and Stanley Dickens was not one of them. If it had have been a championship round, Mass would have won that year's world title.

The qualities that made Mass a top sportscar driver probably prevented him from fulfilling his potential in F1. Largely devoid of ego, Mass was probably “too nice” for F1, reckoned Caldwell. A laid-back and accommodating attitude to motor racing, and life in general, made Mass the perfect choice to partner and mentor a wave of youngsters out of Formula 3 – Michael Schumacher, Heinz-Harald Frentzen and Karl Wendlinger – being groomed for F1.

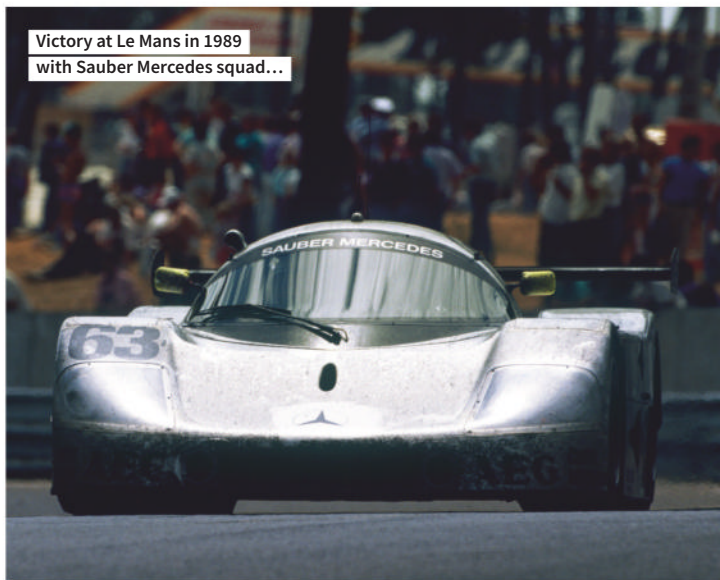
“Jochen really was the right guy to do that,” recalls Sauber team

manager Max Welti. “He had the experience, which is why we brought him into the team in the first place because we were growing up very quickly, and the right attitude.” Wendlinger explained that there “were never any secrets” between Mass and his young charges in 1990. “That was an important time in my career,” he goes on, “and Jochen was a big reason why it worked so well.”

Mass started racing at the age of 21 after a three-year stint in the merchant navy. He was quickly picked up by Ford in touring car racing, winning the Spa 24 Hours in 1972, the German arm of the automotive giant smoothing his way into F2 with March the same season. Mass stopped racing on Mercedes' withdrawal from sportscars at the end of 1991, save for a one-off at Le Mans in 1995 aboard a McLaren F1 GTR, but stayed close to the sport. In the 1990s he was an F1 co-commentator on German TV and latterly an ambassador for Mercedes.

GARY WATKINS

Victory at Le Mans in 1989
with Sauber Mercedes squad...



GETTY IMAGES

...where he excelled as mentor
to Schumacher and Wendlinger



SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES

Sole GP win in 1975
overshadowed by tragic
events at Montjuich Park



CAHIER/GETTY IMAGES



P48 HOW THE ELECTION WORKS

ILLMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Sainz is getting ready to take on Ben Sulayem

FORMULA 1

SAINZ EYES RUN FOR FIA PRESIDENCY

Carlos Sainz Sr is weighing up whether to stand against current incumbent Mohammed Ben Sulayem in December's FIA presidential elections, and will try to ascertain his level of support among the FIA's member clubs before making a final decision.

The two-time World Rally champion and father of Williams Formula 1 driver Carlos Sainz believes that "now is the right time" for him to give something back to the world of motorsport, following a 40-plus-year career across rallying and rally raid championships around the world.

"If I do this it will not be to fight anyone, it will be out of passion and love for motorsport, because I believe I can help and improve certain things," Sainz told Autosport. "I believe it is probably the right time for me personally and professionally, and that is why I am considering it."

The 63-year-old Spaniard believes that there would be no conflict of interest between the presidency and his son, and has been involved in mobility with Spain's Ponle Freno road safety campaign. Although he is yet to

confirm any official bid, Sainz has received words of support from F1's George Russell and eight-time WRC champion Sebastien Ogier.

Should he choose to stand, Sainz would be measured up against the controversial Ben Sulayem, whose first term as FIA president is up at the end of this year. The Emirati's tenure has recently been characterised by his draconian approach to swearing in official press conferences, and he was accused of interfering with stewarding at the 2023 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. He was cleared of this in late 2024, while some of the punishments regarding swearing or misconduct were watered down in recent weeks.

Ben Sulayem is understood to be keen on further changes to the statutes of motorsport's governing body, which could theoretically discourage Sainz from running against him. It is believed that Ben Sulayem wishes to bring forward the deadline for candidates to declare their interest in standing for the presidential election in December, with revised protocols on the agenda and set to be voted on in June's FIA General Assembly.

Bringing the deadline forward would reduce the amount of time Sainz, should he choose to run, has to canvass support from the voting member clubs.

REBECCA CLANCY & BEN HUNT



BARSALI/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

Could Sainz Jr being in F1 pose a problem?

ILLMAN/GETTY IMAGES



FORMULA 1

OAKES QUILTS AFTER ARREST OF BROTHER...

Alpine team principal Oliver Oakes left the team following May's Miami Grand Prix, effectively placing executive advisor Flavio Briatore in control in the interim. A rift between Oakes and Briatore was rumoured but denied by both parties, with personal reasons cited by Oakes in his decision to depart. The Briton was installed as team principal in mid-2024, following Bruno Famin's decision to step down from the Renault-owned operation.

It emerged that in the days prior, Oakes's brother William – a director of Oakes's own Hitech Grand Prix team – was arrested at Silverstone Park and charged with 'transferring criminal property'; a statement from the Metropolitan Police stated that he was "in possession of a large amount of cash" and was remanded in police custody. Oakes is not under any criminal investigation and has not been linked to the arrest.

As such, Oliver Oakes remains a director at Hitech, which had its own ambitions of joining the F1 grid for 2026 before its application was denied. The team previously counted Dmitry Mazepin (father of ex-F1 driver Nikita) as a majority shareholder, before his stake was relinquished to Oakes following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

FILIP CLEEREN & JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



Colapinto had first race of 2025 at Imola

SUTTON / FORMULA 1 / GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 1

...AS DOOHAN REPLACED BY COLAPINTO

In a move mooted before the 2025 season had even begun, Franco Colapinto replaced Jack Doohan at Alpine for the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix and beyond, with the Australian demoted to a reserve role at the team.

Doohan had endured six difficult race weekends; the Queenslander showed flashes of one-lap pace, but struggled to deliver consistent race weekends overall. He outqualified Pierre Gasly at the Miami Grand Prix,

but was then caught up in a Turn 1 tangle with Liam Lawson, ending his race on the spot.

Alpine's announcement of the shuffle stated that Colapinto's entry at Imola was the start of an initial five-race deal, although executive advisor Flavio Briatore later denied that there was any particular timeframe applied to his tenure. The Argentinian impressed in his nine-race spell at Williams in 2024 after replacing Logan Sargeant at the team, with points-scoring finishes at both the Azerbaijan and United States grands prix, but also sustained heavy crashes at the wet Brazilian round and the Las Vegas event.

Prior to his call-up, Colapinto worked as Alpine's reserve and undertook much of the team's

in-season simulator work alongside fellow reserve Paul Aron. On his Alpine debut, Colapinto endured a difficult Imola weekend in which he had a heavy qualifying crash at Tamborello after dipping a wheel onto the grass. He nonetheless finished 16th, then followed that up with 13th at Monaco after being slowest in qualifying.

Backed by sponsors based in Argentina and a fervent fanbase, Colapinto has already had to act as something of a mediator following online abuse towards his fellow drivers from a small minority of his fans. Yuki Tsunoda was initially targeted following his frustration towards Colapinto at Imola when the then 21-year-old held up the Red Bull driver in free practice, and a subset of Argentinians hurled abuse – some racially tinged – at Tsunoda on the Japanese's Instagram account.

Colapinto urged his fans to treat other drivers with respect, and added that Tsunoda was "right" to be upset. Doohan and his father, motorcycle legend Mick, were also in the offenders' crosshairs following a social media post that was proven to be fake.

FILIP CLEEREN



Argentinian stepped up from reserve role

JUN / PADDOCK / NURPHOTO

VERSTAPPEN.NL



'FRANZ HERMANN': F1 WORLD CHAMPION!

Max Verstappen drove GT3 machinery in May during a Nurburgring Langstrecken-Serie test on the Nordschleife under the pseudonym of 'Franz Hermann' so as to not arouse suspicion.

The four-time Formula 1 champion drove Emil Frey Racing's Ferrari 296 GT3, which the Swiss team usually races in DTM with Verstappen's protege, Thierry Vermeulen, among the drivers. Suggestions were that Verstappen was on the pace from the get-go, and the Dutchman confirmed that he had beaten Norwegian Christian Krogn's NLS GT3 lap record of 7m49.578s.

Despite the headline result, Verstappen was typically unbothered by the lap time, stating that his intention was to help EFR prepare for a potential entry in the near future – and to help himself get acquainted should he wish to eventually contest the Nurburgring 24 Hours.

"They asked me for a fake name, so I said, 'Let's make it as German as we can'," Verstappen said of his choice to run as Franz Hermann. "Then you're not on the entry list, otherwise people would wake up at 8am knowing that I'm on it. I knew that once I was there that people would realise."

Verstappen estimated that he had driven "thousands" of Nordschleife laps on his simulator but, to race at the 24 Hours, he would need to secure a special permit. His appearance on the entry list for the 21-22 June race would be somewhat unlikely.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

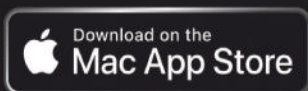
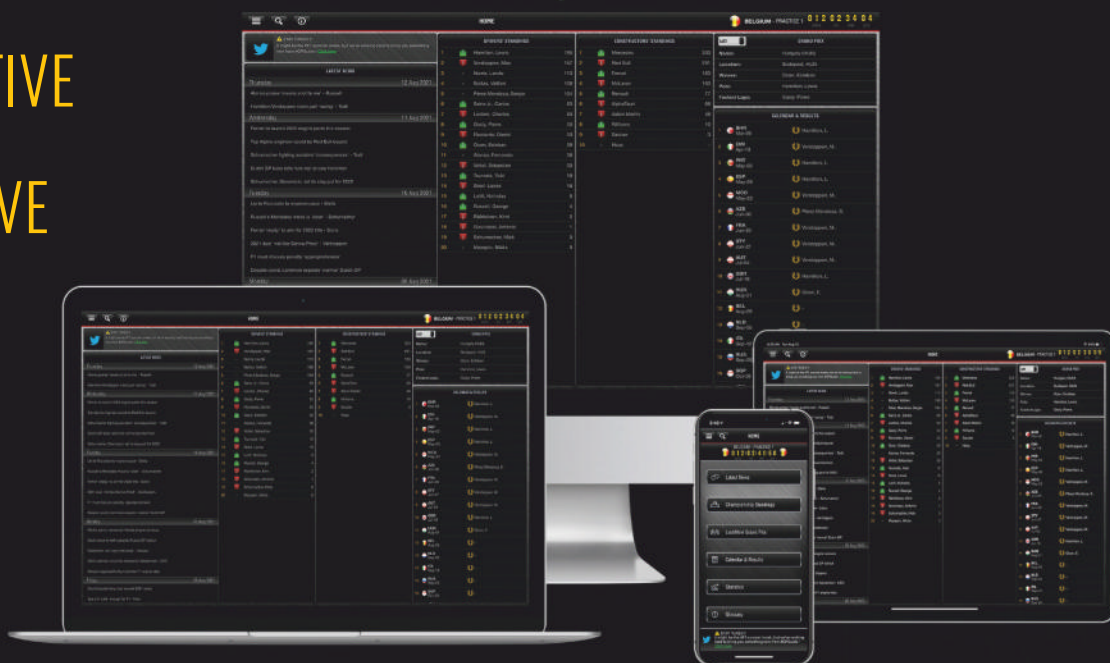


GRAND PRIX GUIDE



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FORMULA ONE LICENSING BV OWNS THE FORMULA ONE TRADEMARKS





Norris was ahead of Piastri in this 'race'

DUNBAR/GETTY IMAGES/LEGO GROUP

FORMULA 1

BUILDING A LEGO-CY AT MIAMI GP

'Play well'. That's the meaning of the Danish 'leg godt' that derived the name LEGO – the building block brand known the world over.

In a remarkable feat of engineering, creativity and innovation, LEGO allowed the 20 Formula 1 drivers to play well – if not fairly – during the pre-race parade ahead of May's Miami Grand Prix. The idea to put them in 10 near-full-scale bespoke models and send them on a lap of the Miami International Autodrome has significantly raised the bar on F1 partnership activations.

It proves that the championship is open to new ideas of how to promote its increasing portfolio of partners, and clearly the teams and drivers have bought into the fresh way of thinking, too.

"This latest creative feat marks an extraordinary collaboration between the LEGO Group, Formula 1 and its 10 teams," said chief product and marketing officer Julia Goldin. "We know that large, driveable builds excite fans, and we're thrilled by the response to unveiling all 10 at once. We hope these creations inspire everyone to see that with imagination and a LEGO brick, anything is possible."

Telling the drivers not to take the parade lap too competitively was always going to fall on deaf ears and they enjoyed battling –

albeit at much slower speed.

Built as close to their real-life equivalents as possible, each car was made using close to 400,000 LEGO bricks and is in the individual colours of the team, with the correct livery and sponsors included. Each weighed 1000kg and was capable of speeds up to 20km/h (12mph) from the electric power unit, running on authentic Pirelli tyres.

The finished product, created by a team of 26 designers and engineers at the company's Kladno site in the Czech Republic, left F1's top drivers impressed.

"That was the most fun drivers' parade we've ever had, some dirty driving, it was great fun," Lewis Hamilton said, with Max Verstappen adding: "I do think they will have to sweep the track. There is some LEGO debris!"

The cars will need some rebuilding work before heading off on a world tour, which will include appearances at other F1 races.

F1 has been widening its official partnership opportunities recently, but licensing agreements – PUMA and Mattel have similar deals to LEGO – is a surefire way of bringing in revenue it had not been able to harness in the past.

MARK MANN-BRYANS



BEN HUNT

FANATIC HAMILTON

Lewis Hamilton has played his cards right by signing a multi-year partnership with collectibles giant Fanatics. The Ferrari star brought areas of London to a standstill when people queued from 4am to catch a glimpse of him as he opened the Fanatics flagship store on Regent Street.

HAAS GETS MESSAGE

Haas has a new sponsorship deal with global communications platform Infobip. The Croatian giant provides tools for Google, Uber, WhatsApp, Apple Messages for Business and others. As well as Infobip branding on the Haas cars, it will help the team connect with its fanbase in new ways.

MERC PLAYS MARKET

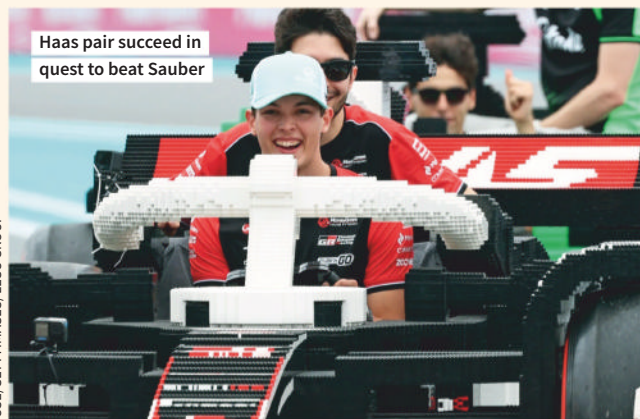
The Mercedes Formula 1 squad has a new multi-year partnership with financial market powerhouse Nasdaq. The agreement began at the Miami GP, where Nasdaq had its brand included alongside other Mercedes partners – a third of which are companies listed on Nasdaq's exchange.

THE BUSINESS FORMULA

Scan the QR code to sign up for the Autosport Business newsletter. Every Wednesday morning our F1 business correspondent, Mark Mann-Bryans, will piece together



the latest from the world of motorsport, delivered direct to your inbox.



Haas pair succeed in quest to beat Sauber

ROSE/GETTY IMAGES/LEGO GROUP



THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES



Go hard or go home:
Max about to pounce

INSIDER

We should applaud Verstappen seizing the moment, says Stuart Codling

Chutzpah – a word that, pronounced correctly, sounds vaguely reminiscent of a cat trying to eject a furball from its oesophagus. Derived from Hebrew, it describes a manner of supreme self-confidence and audacity, qualities Max Verstappen possesses in spades.

He is a polarising figure in the world of motorsport fandom, owing to the proliferation of online silos and the toxification of public discourse enabled by social media – and yes, the irksome question mark some still see hanging over *that* 2021 championship denouement. But even those who practise to dislike him ought to respect moves such as the one that won him the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix – even if that respect comes grudgingly and with all the grace of, yes, a cat coughing up a furball.

As Verstappen made a slightly stuttering launch from second on the grid, it looked for a moment as if he would be disputing third place with Lando Norris's McLaren, while Norris's team-mate Oscar Piastri zipped away from pole position with George Russell's Mercedes occupying his mirrors. And yet by the apex of the first, left-hand segment of Tamburello, Verstappen was alongside Piastri's car and staking a claim for the Aussie to give him room.

It was a replay of the first corner in Saudi Arabia, but done right. No spearing off-track and rejoining in an unearned lead, no need for team boss Christian Horner to arrive at the post-race press conference with a sheaf of inconclusive screen grabs, no need to pump prime the lunatic fringe of toxic fandom to shriek about the perceived injustice. Just two drivers at the top of their game, duking it out for position without hitting one another.

"The main factor remains the swap of position and the outcome of lap one," was McLaren team principal Andrea Stella's typically scientific take on it.

"It was a great move," was CEO Zak Brown's more emotive view. "I don't think we had anything for him [Max] today."

"I think maybe Oscar was more focused on Russell," said Horner, "and he left the slightest of gaps – and, you know, Max just sent it and it was kind of win it or bin it. He's just so good in that situation where he just sees a gap and it's so decisive for him."

Piastri thought he had the corner – that he had both the inside line and enough distance from Verstappen after the initial getaway. He had the presence of mind and car control to avoid taking them both out – or running Verstappen off onto the gravel, as Charles Leclerc would do to Alex Albon later in the race.

Verstappen's detractors will, no doubt, claim that if the positions were reversed, he would have had no compunction in releasing the brake a little and 'occupying the crease', to use a cricketing term, using his car as a block to force the other driver to give it up. Well, that's what the comments section is for.

"I thought I had it under control," said Piastri. "It was a good move from Max. I'll learn for next time."

Piastri has been a full-time Formula 1 driver for more than two seasons now, though he has had a potentially

"For good or ill, Verstappen is a force of nature. You don't have to like it"

race-winning car under him for rather less than that. Still, you would expect that he would know what to expect from the four-time world champion by now – for, in the words of another giant of their age, "If you no longer go for a gap, you are no longer a racing driver..."

For good or ill, Verstappen is a force of nature. You don't have to like it. Indeed, haters, take heart from 19th century essayist William Hazlitt's words in his seminal tome *On The Pleasure Of Hating*: "Public nuisances are in the nature of public benefits. How long did the Pope, the Bourbons, and the Inquisition keep the people of England in breath, and supply them with nicknames to vent their spleen upon!

"Had they done us any harm of late? No; but we have always a quantity of superfluous bile upon the stomach, and we wanted an object to let it out upon..." ❧

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INSIDER

The 'second Red Bull car problem' isn't going away, says Oleg Karpov

It was almost as if Christian Horner didn't hear the question. On the evening after the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix, he was asked whether it's "starting to become critical" for Yuki Tsunoda after his Q1 crash, as he struggles to gain confidence with what's often described as a 'peaky' Red Bull car – and such incidents aren't the best foundation for fostering that growth.

It's something that can set a driver back to a point below where he started. We've seen it before, haven't we? With Sergio Perez going down a spiral for several weekends after one setback, and Liam Lawson unable to even pick himself up from the floor after a rather difficult test.

"It was a big accident," said Horner. "The most important thing with that was that he jumped out of it OK. And then I thought actually his race today, he was very committed, he raced hard and well. To come from the pitlane into the points when the grid is so tight... The strategy worked out well for him as well. He drove a good race."

And that is the right answer – from a team principal who needs to back his driver. Yet Horner is also fully aware that a 10th-place finish isn't exactly a "good race", especially when Max Verstappen won comfortably with the same machinery.

There's clearly a narrative here: Red Bull is trying hard not to repeat the mistakes it made with Perez and Lawson. So even Helmut Marko, usually blunt and straightforward, is rather cautious in his assessments when it comes to questions about Tsunoda. At least for now. The Japanese said it all himself, after all, calling his crash "stupid" and taking the blame for "trying to be a hero". Which is probably the right response too.

But those are just words. It's not fixing the issue, which is often labelled as "a second Red Bull car problem". By

the time Tsunoda crashed in Imola qualifying, he had already completed four races with Red Bull. Despite early promise with some decent practice performances, in the most important sessions he's still been struggling to meet the desired objective: to be at least within a few tenths of his team-mate.

The longer it takes for him, the more pressure is going to pile up on his shoulders. For a driver in a team that, despite all the struggles, still wins races, not finishing higher than ninth in the first five grands prix isn't really acceptable.

There's one excuse, though, for each driver who gets into that second Red Bull – the "peaky" and "pointy" character of the car, tailored around Verstappen. But there's one fundamental problem with that: the whole hypothesis is based on the fact that several drivers in a row have been unable to tame the capricious machinery of Formula 1's most successful team in recent years. And it's their evident failures that reinforce this theory and strengthen the myth (which very well may be reality) of the divine nature of the four-time world champion's talent: he does appear to be not just a great driver, but a superhuman.

But this theory clearly lacks one irrefutable piece of evidence: that second Red Bull car hasn't been driven by a first-class-calibre F1 driver for a very long time. Was Alex Albon ready for a top team after his 12 races with Toro Rosso? He wasn't – and it isn't a surprise that he struggled so much.

Is it that shocking that Perez, who spent most of his F1 career racing in the midfield, wasn't capable of matching Verstappen? Probably not. And how could anyone – really, anyone – expect that Lawson, with his pretty average record in junior categories, would be anywhere near the Dutchman, having contested 11

"Red Bull is trying hard not to repeat the mistakes it made with Perez and Lawson"

F1 races before his big promotion?

"Yes, it is probably tricky to handle," one driver told me when Lawson was still in his Red Bull agony, "but it's still a car. You just need to drive it."

There's no doubt Verstappen is one of the greatest drivers F1 has ever seen. But he is not a magician.

What if there's no such issue with that second car at all? That's a question which is impossible to answer right now – because Red Bull never actually pushed hard enough to get a good enough person to drive it. But that question must be bothering Horner and Marko themselves.

And it looks more and more likely that Yuki Tsunoda – being effectively the team's last choice – isn't going to provide that answer either. ❄



INSIDER

Pat Symonds takes a look at the details behind Formula 1's halo

Our question this month comes from John Dunne, who asks if it would ever be possible to design a halo strong enough such that it doesn't need the central pillar. It may seem a simple question, but it leads me to think about exactly what the halo has to do and therefore explore a little bit of the science of structures, as well as some interesting aspects of human perception and why our eyes can indeed sometimes deceive us.

Firstly, let's examine if there would be any advantage in removing the central pillar. You might think that the pillar obstructs vision or at the very least distracts the driver just as they need their visual perception to accurately place the car at the apex of a corner.

In reality the driver is not aware of the presence of the central pillar and this is due to something called retinal disparity. If we have two well-functioning eyes, we are able to use the separate images that each eye sees to form a three-dimensional image and hence judge both the position and the distance of the object we are viewing. This occurs because the separate images that each eye sees are very slightly different as each one sees the object from a slightly different angle. Our brain then combines these images to give us the depth perception necessary to judge distance.

Retinal disparity occurs because your dominant eye will see an object directly in front of, and close to, it while at the same time your non-dominant eye will concentrate on the background. Again, the brain processes these two bits of information in a different way, making the object in front of the dominant eye appear transparent or at least translucent.

So it may be that there is actually no advantage in removing the central pillar. Indeed, the opposite is true and one of the many factors that led to the introduction of the halo was the incident in Hungary in 2009 when Felipe Massa was knocked unconscious when hit on the head by a spring that fell off the car he was following. While the halo

central pillar may not stop all missiles that approach the driver, research by the FIA at the time showed that it was capable of stopping the majority of objects and specifically would stop an errant wheel that may otherwise strike the driver. It was this latter case that led to much of the testing of the halo and the aeroscreen devices that were evaluated at the same time. It was appreciated that the driver's head remained the most vulnerable part, but the task of stopping a wheel and tyre was going to require a serious structure.

The halo project started in 2011 but it was not introduced into Formula 1 until 2018, which gives some measure of the difficulty of finding the best solution. A lot of experimentation was done, which consisted of firing a 20kg wheel and tyre assembly at 140mph at the candidate solutions. The aeroscreen performed well but suffered from degradation of vision due to rain, oil and rubber, as well as having some distracting reflections that the drivers did not like. Eventually the halo was the chosen solution.

The halo consists of a fabricated construction of titanium. It needs to withstand a load of 125kN (14 tons) applied to it, about the weight of a half-full double-decker London bus. Obviously, such a device is not light. It weighs around 7kg, but the real weight comes from the increased chassis structure needed to support the loads that the halo can transfer to the monocoque. This leads to a further mass increase probably similar to that of the halo itself.

It's also a device that aerodynamicists hate. It is in the direct path of airflow to the engine intake and the rear wing, and could be very destructive, but luckily the FIA allows some mitigation by means of lightweight fairings that reduce the otherwise detrimental effects.

While all of this explains the intricacies of the halo, I have not yet answered the question. To do so I could go into some relatively simple maths to show the difference in stress under a given load between a halo with and

"In reality the driver is not aware of the presence of the central pillar"

without the central support, but let me try and illustrate it practically. If you take a standard school-type ruler and clamp it over the edge of a table and then press down on it somewhere in the middle of the overhanging part, you will see it deflect. Now support the free end, say on the arm of a chair, and press down in the middle again. The deflection is considerably less and, as stress is proportional to strain, the stress is also much less.

So yes, you could make a halo without a central support, but it would be considerably heavier to return the stress to an acceptable level and would be less effective as it would still leave a large opening in front of the driver. ✨

**Want to ask Pat a tech question for a future issue?
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WHAT'S GOING ON AT FERRARI?

The promise made evident by last season's constructors' title battle has yet to materialise in 2025 as the squad struggles to address its deficit in qualifying

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES



FOX

IF FERRARI'S CURRENT supremacy in the World Endurance Championship were to represent the Prancing Horse at something approaching its fleetest gallop, then its F1 team currently seems to be operating at a steady canter. Contrary to popular belief, 2025 does not represent Ferrari at its worst – total implosions across its history are rare but, when they do occur, they tend to resemble all-encompassing maelstroms that threaten to pull everything that surrounds them into the vortex. The waters are choppy at the moment, but not at the cadence that sinks ships; the Ferrari boat is 'merely' rocking at the moment.

It looked so good last year. After a mid-season wobble, instigated by a floor update that led the team up a development dead-end, Ferrari rallied over the second half of the season and brought itself into a constructors' championship title fight with McLaren to roll back the years to their various duopolies in F1. Just 21 points separated the two teams on the prelude to the Abu Dhabi finale, with McLaren winning the bout by just 14 at the season's chequered flag.

When you consider the note on which Ferrari ended 2024, the decision to make not-inconsequential changes over the winter seems risky in retrospect. Sure, Lewis Hamilton's internet-shattering move was done long before, but his signing was not the only way Ferrari tried to reinvent itself over the off-season. When it thrashed out the technical specifications of its 2025 car, the team felt that it had extracted all it could from the pushrod-front, pullrod-rear suspension geometry and thought it should follow the lead of Red Bull and McLaren by upending the front rocker arm to make it a pullrod-operated front unit.

Ferrari stuck with the pullrod at the rear too, despite the packaging bonuses offered in moving the rockers to the top of the gearbox. It's a deceptively significant change, because it leads to a shift in the way the loads are placed through the tyres and the manner in which the car is operated. Although Ferrari has contended that its SF-25 is merely evolutionary, changing any part that creates knock-on effects with regard to set-ups and customisation naturally produces a 'fog of war' effect, where a team's engineers have vast unexplored regions in their 'map' of performance, rather than the small blank spots left by a smaller evolutionary change.

On the launch of its 2025 car, Ferrari technical chief Loic Serra stated that the full envelope of Maranello's previous chariot had been fully explored, and the team needed to move the game on. Building a car with more room to grow would usually seem like a sensible decision but, with just one year before the current rules are thrown in the bin, does Ferrari really have time to exploit the full potential of its latest car? It has to at least try, lest 2025 prove to be a damp squib.

HAMILTON: FERRARI'S BLOCKBUSTER SIGNING ON INCONSISTENT FORM

For all of the coat-draped-on-shoulders *posare* in preview of Hamilton's first season at Ferrari, the seven-time world champion's oeuvre in 2025 has been remarkably hit or miss. Hit: sprint race win in China. Miss: disqualification at the Chinese Grand Prix. Hit: fourth at Imola. Miss: qualified 12th at Imola. Every weekend, his fortunes appear to turn on a dime with seemingly very little rhyme or reason.

In reality, there's rhyme. The Ferrari generally starts off a weekend with a solid baseline (hence Hamilton's China sprint performance) but, when it comes to the 'twixt-session set-up fiddling, it hits a bit of a ceiling with what it can do with qualifying pace. Hamilton, who last year revealed his fears that he's lost his former edge on single-lap pace, tends to bear the brunt of that versus qualifying maestro Charles Leclerc. That's the rhyme – how about the reason behind Hamilton's through-weekend rebound? Ferrari's improving race pace has kept it in the game.

Team principal Fred Vasseur estimated after Imola that Ferrari had a qualifying deficit of around 0.3-0.4 seconds per lap in raw pace, which can put it on the cusp of a premature Q2 elimination if the car isn't hooked up just so for a quali lap. But it's pretty handy on race pace; »



High points for Hamilton this year have been patchy – victory from pole in Shanghai sprint is the stand-out

Hamilton takes to the grass during FP1 at Imola; Q2 exit hamstrung the fourth-place-finishing Brit's podium hopes

CHINA NEWS SERVICE



ISAKOVIC/AFP



HONE

Double points finish for Hamilton and Leclerc in Chinese GP lost to disqualification

Leclerc's frustration apparent as the SF-25 continues to fall short of his expectations



ILLMAN



Vasseur makes much of the team's race pace, and believes there's more to come from the car

the oft-chuckling Frenchman made the outlandish claim that the SF-25 was the quickest car going at Jeddah for April's Saudi Arabian GP. But he's not wrong; Leclerc's long medium-tyre stint was only about 0.3-0.4s per lap slower than that of Max Verstappen and Oscar Piastri (and the Monegasque did eight and 10 laps respectively longer on his yellow-walled Pirellis), and was quicker than both during his last stint on hard tyres.

"We always had this delta, quali pace to race pace," Vasseur explains. "At Jeddah, we were probably the fastest on track in the race and three tenths off in quali. Miami, it was the same delta. Imola, it's probably the same delta. I think that we don't have the best car but we are really close in [race] conditions. That means that we need to do a step on the quali mode."

As much as Hamilton may lament the natural pace evaporation that occurs on entering his fifth decade, he's taken solace in the idea that Ferrari can make something of their Sundays. Take Imola, for example; both Leclerc and Hamilton were filtered out of the pole reckoning in Q2, with a handful of traditionally 'slower' cars putting themselves between the front row and the Ferraris. At Mercedes, Hamilton might have turned up to the press pen with tail firmly between legs and at his monosyllabic worst; instead, he has found something of a loquacious streak in explaining the progress he's making – no matter how glacial that progress appears to be.

"China was pretty great, but I've always loved when you're fighting from further back and coming through," Hamilton said after that Imola race. "That's how I started off as a kid. That's always a better feeling than starting and finishing first. But definitely an absolutely mega race and so many positives to take away."

"The strategy was really fantastic; they made great calls. In China I felt really aligned with the car and then the only other time is [Imola]. I felt that real synergy, and I think the set-up was great. We made a bit of an improvement in our performance for the race. We've just got to unlock the potential in qualifying. If we had qualified [higher up] we would have been fighting for a podium, which is something we didn't think would be possible."

Imola's fourth-place finish was a decent return for Hamilton, who raced in Italy in red for the first time. But he'd dearly love to stand on Monza's 'floating' podium and soak in the adulation from a sea of tifosi below. If you're a Ferrari driver, indulging in that fervour is a perk of the job – if you can get that far.

LECLERC: IS FERRARI'S FAVOURITE SON LOSING PATIENCE?

It wasn't so long ago that Leclerc felt like a Ferrari lifer – "*Il Predestinato*", as he's known in Italy; "the predestined one". Even for the reverence he commands there, as Ferrari's leading light since joining the team in 2019, his patience continues to be tested.

Leclerc is now 27. He's arguably approaching the peak of his powers, and has blended searing qualifying pace with an incisive-yet-delicate touch on racecraft and race management over his time at Ferrari. If 2024 got his hopes up that he'd be a very real contender for this year's title – he was tipped by many in the media as a genuine threat to the McLarens and Max Verstappen, Ferrari's swing-and-a-miss so far this year has failed to deliver.

His frustrations have added a very different edge to his comments; usually, Leclerc has been a self-deprecatative sort who has been more keen to throw himself under the bus than his team – a bit like Lando Norris, but not quite with the same ubiquity. This year, however, there's a common strand in that his disappointment is not directed internally. He knows that his ability is worthy ➤



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New floor and revised suspension package reported to be due ahead of the British Grand Prix

of more illustrious results and that Ferrari should be in a position where it can produce title-contending machinery. Last season, then, feels like something of a tease.

In times of strife, drivers default to the usual aphorisms about hard work, understanding, and anything else that makes it sound like they're on the cusp of pulling an all-nighter to submit a piece of coursework. And Leclerc recognises that, because he knows that he has to temper his exasperation and pull punches to keep the team on-side.

"I mean, this is the obvious answer, but that's what we are doing," alludes Leclerc of the need to put noses to grindstones. "I don't think there's any silver bullet to the situation we are in. We just need to work and try to understand from where this problem that we have in qualifying comes from, which is what is slowing us down at the moment."

Last year, Leclerc committed his long-term future to Ferrari; although the length of his contract was unconfirmed, rumours suggest that it will last until the end of 2029. So his expectations that Ferrari should match his commitment to the cause come as no surprise. He could have signed a shorter deal and had his pick of the teams, depending on who was most likely to win a title, but it's as if winning a championship with anyone other than Ferrari is of little interest to him. He doesn't want to be any old F1 champion – he wants to be a *Ferrari* champion.

He'll have to wait until 2026 at the earliest for that, unless the team miraculously lights the touchpaper over the next two-thirds of the season to chalk up win after win...

WHAT'S NEXT FOR FERRARI IN 2025?

Beyond the mandated front-wing revisions for the Spanish GP, Ferrari is expected to keep its foot in with development over 2025, despite the utmost importance of preparing for the new regulations arriving in 2026. This will allow Serra, taking over from the Aston Martin-bound Enrico Cardile as technical director, a chance to make his influence felt upon the team; the Frenchman arrived too late in 2024 to have a significant impact on the 2025 design.

Vasseur also wants the team to continue working on 2025. Not only does he feel that there's a lot more to come from this year's car, but he'll also know the value of ending a season with answers to every key question – even if the 2026 rules are completely different, the work on processes and validation will be valuable across both projects.

"I have great confidence in our working group – we know we need to improve, but that's a constant in motorsport," explains Vasseur. "Even if you're leading, you know you must keep improving, otherwise you expose yourself to attacks from rivals. As for this year, we've probably made some mistakes with the car. We need to do a better job, but the motivation is there and the mindset is there. We just need to keep growing [as well as] identifying and solving problems.

"We often end race weekends with the feeling that we haven't extracted the maximum from the car. As long as we have that feeling, I can't say I know the exact potential of the project. That's why I believe there are still signs that there is room for improvement."

Reports from Italy suggest that Ferrari is planning to have a new floor and revised suspension package online in time for July's British GP, which it hopes will be enough to imbue the car with a more competitive streak across the second half of the year. From there, the team's gaze should shift towards 2026, where it hopes to deliver on its desire to bless Leclerc and Hamilton with a championship-winning steed. But if either driver hoped for title success this year, then it's going to take a little longer than planned. ❄



His team's efforts paid off handsomely for Verstappen in Italy

IS RED BULL ON THE REBOUND?

Max Verstappen's win at Imola shows the squad is heading in the right direction in the wake of updates to address the RB21's much-talked-about shortcomings

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

Red Bull had ample reason to be concerned after the Miami Grand Prix. Max Verstappen may have successfully pounced for pole position, but there was a sense of inevitability that he would be leapfrogged by the two McLarens as the orange machines of Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris hove into view.

After introducing some minor floor updates for Miami, Red Bull followed up with new additions to the car at Imola. The floor trialled on Max Verstappen's RB21 through the weekend in Florida was now fully minted with the inclusion of new sidepods, plus revised rear-wheel aerodynamics and duct work around the wheel hub. It took the full gamut of Emilia Romagna GP practice sessions to dial them in; it's rare that anything simply works off the bat in F1, and each upgrade has its own requisite tinkering time to get it to play with the existing bits on the car.

The initial long-run numbers didn't look great after Friday's running, with estimates having Verstappen around 0.4-0.5 seconds per lap down on the McLarens, but the most important part was that it was in possession of said numbers. Once the trackside engineers and the support engineers back in Milton Keynes got their mitts on them, the overnight work could begin. From there, it appears that the tide has started to turn.

Much has been said of Red Bull's RB21. We've contended previously that it's a genuinely quick car with a tiny operating window, although this assessment has not been good enough for a handful of fans because it doesn't fit the narrative that Verstappen is proving transcendent in a hopeless chassis. But nuance can exist in F1 discourse. Verstappen *is absolutely* demonstrating his class this year and has been by far the most impressive driver, but performing exquisitely in a car and getting good results out of it by definition proves that it's possible for the car »





Verstappen could not keep the McLarens at bay in Miami

VIVAS/GETTY IMAGES



FLIP CLEEREN



Key area of focus are revised aero around the rear wheels...

FOX/GETTY IMAGES



...plus more underbody performance from updates to sidepods and floor

FLIP CLEEREN



Wache stresses difficulties of setting up current-generation F1 cars

THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES

to achieve those things. It's all about how the driver operates it, and he is walking the high-wire perfectly.

But even he couldn't hope to compete in races where tyre degradation was a considerable factor. Even in the event that Verstappen got every single micro-correction right during a stint – minimal slip, no scrub through the longer-radius corners, and no lock-ups – the Red Bull still had a tendency to chew through the Pirellis in the final third of a race stint, while McLaren did not. Accusations that the Woking squad was doing something untoward to maintain that tyre degradation advantage didn't wash – at some point, rather than point the finger outwards, it requires you to look inwardly.

And, awarding full credit to Red Bull, it has. There are two mechanisms to this: consistent downforce, and temperature management – both of which the team has addressed.

The downforce characteristic is one that's easy to explain: if you've got an aero package that delivers strong levels of downforce in both high and low-speed corners, the rear axle is simply less prone to sliding because the tyres have more vertical load placed upon them. In Red Bull's approach, there have been several facets in its development over the past two rounds that have

“It's the first time in a long time we've had the pace to really pull away and out-deg the McLaren”

allowed this: that it has concentrated on drawing more performance from the underbody with its sidepod and floor updates, and from the more direct revisions of the aerodynamic furniture clustered upon the rear-wheel uprights.

This is all great, and minimising the lateral forces through the tyres is a justified pursuit. But it only gets you so far if the mechanism of maintaining a sensible temperature within the wheel assembly is not well developed. Suggestions are that McLaren's superiority in mitigating tyre degradation lies in this area, and spy shots of the exposed wheel hubs do suggest that the thermodynamicists have been busy understanding and building optimal flow in this region.

The build and retention of heat in the tyres is different for both qualifying and race conditions. On a single lap, the tyres need to be up to temperature at the start. You can afford to be slightly aggressive here, with the caveat that the tyre shouldn't overheat halfway through the lap and knock the car out of its peak performance range. In a race, it's different; sure, the tyres do need heat at the start of a race to ensure a driver doesn't enter the first corner several positions behind where they qualified, but the generation of heat must be a lot slower to ensure that the full chain chemical reactions behind thermal degradation

don't occur straight away. Then there's the temperature maintenance aspect of that, and airflow through the brake ducts and the wheel hub must sufficiently pull hot air out of the assembly.

Hence why Red Bull has addressed the rear-wheel duct areas too, to give it a bit more of a chance of capitalising on its added downforce. Otherwise, it can mitigate the abrasion on the tyre through reduced sliding – but it still wanders into the same end-of-stint thermal deg if the temperatures are not controlled.

“I think definitely we've managed to put some performance on the car and get the car into a better window; as soon as you take away the sliding, you're able to manage the temperature a lot better,” says team boss Christian Horner, who was effusive in his praise of the team following Verstappen's win at Imola. “I would say that's probably, since certainly Brazil last year, the first time I can remember in a long time we've had the pace to really pull away and out-deg the McLaren.”

Technical director Pierre Wache agreed that the updates allowed Red Bull far more opportunity to manage its tyres through a stint, but also laid bare how difficult it was to dial in the set-ups of the current generation of cars, with just “millimetres” involved in precipitous swings in performance. Hence the metaphor of a narrow window, one that Luke Skywalker would need Force intervention to hit with even a BB gun.

“The set-up improved a lot,” explains Wache. “And I think the new package gives the opportunity to improve even more. It's so difficult now with these cars. You put one millimetre there or two millimetres there, it's such a narrow window. Plus on top of the tyre, it's so narrow now. More or less, you have no travel with this car. It's so difficult. And the engine mode has a big effect also.”

Is this the point at which Red Bull has genuinely turned the tide on McLaren? In an environment that deals so frequently in cold, hard logic and data, it's only fair to ask for a much larger sample size before making a real conclusion, with Monaco not much help given it is such an outlier.

“I'm not sure it was a big improvement,” adds Wache. “But it was in the right direction. I think it opened some set-ups and maybe Max being able to use it more as a car. I cannot say more than that at the moment.”

“I think generally we're getting a better grip and a better understanding, and the technical team have been working very hard on it,” adds Horner. “We're building a bit of momentum, which is important at this stage in the championship.”

Taking into account the long gestation times for developments like these, it demonstrated that Red Bull has been long aware of where its tyre management issues resided and what needed to be addressed before knocking on the door. But it might take a few more races to truly determine whether Red Bull has truly sorted its problems – and whether McLaren is able to successfully respond. ❧



FLYING ANTONELLI

AN F1 RECORD-BREAKER WITH LESSONS TO LEARN

*The F1 rookie's searing speed is not in any doubt.
As the season unfolds, the teenager and his team
aim to prove he's in the right place to hone his craft*

MARK MANN-BRYANS

PHOTOGRAPHY MERCEDES AND GETTY IMAGES

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff has admitted he was taking a risk when he opted to name rookie teenager Andrea Kimi Antonelli as the man to step into the cockpit of Ferrari-bound Lewis Hamilton. Even if Mercedes has been knocked off its perch during the ground effect era, the seat vacated by Formula 1's statistically best-ever driver was always going to be sought after.

Wolff had flirted with Max Verstappen, enraging Red Bull counterpart Christian Horner in the process, while other names were also linked. Verstappen, ultimately, stayed put and it was Antonelli, racing in Formula 2 with Prema at the time, who was promoted into the most intense of spotlights.

But the groundswell of support that poured out following his pole lap for the sprint race at the Miami Grand Prix spoke volumes about both the man and his potential in F1. "We were willing to take that risk even if it meant mistakes," enthused Wolff. "And now we're being rewarded for our courage."

As the youngest driver to take pole position in any format of a world championship F1 race, 18-year-old Antonelli was met out of the car by Mercedes team-mate George Russell before heading to the garage where Wolff and race engineer Peter Bonnington were among the well-wishers. As the team toasted what Wolff described as a "mini-pole", given it was for the Saturday sprint rather than a full-length grand prix, it felt as though the 'when' moment – as opposed to the 'if' – had arrived in Miami Gardens.

Antonelli, born and raised almost in the shadow of Imola, was 11 years old when he was signed to the Mercedes driver academy, emerging as a precocious racer under the stewardship of talent scout Gwen Lagrue. Antonelli's star was on the rise from that point on but, when rumours began to swirl that he would be the man to replace seven-time world champion Hamilton for the 2025 season, eyebrows – from those on the outside, at least – were raised.

An open secret for a long time ahead of the official announcement at the end of August, Antonelli's unveiling was somewhat overshadowed by a huge crash on his maiden F1 outing during the first free practice session at the Italian GP. After showing some impressive speed straight out of the pits, it all went wrong for Antonelli just 10 minutes into the session when he crashed out at Parabolica while pushing too hard, too soon. Wolff was quick to divert any blame.

"I wouldn't say it was a mistake, but I think we weren't completely right in assessing the pressures that he could find himself under," he admitted. "He has been brilliant in testing. He has never put a foot wrong in the many thousands of kilometres that he's done. But it's a different ball game if you're an Italian driver, you're 18 years old in Monza and it's your first opportunity.

"He was so quick, and that was his first session in Italy, about to be announced as a driver, which everybody pre-empted. I like his approach. He's

fast on the first lap out of the pits, and that is what he's demonstrated. Obviously he was too fast for the condition of the track and for the car at that stage, so it was balancing the ambition, the motivation and the skill versus also the experience that FP1 is FP1. I knew that that was going to hurt him, that was going to hurt him emotionally."

F2 chief executive Bruno Michel has seen up close what Antonelli is capable of – he is one of several drivers he has watched come through the ranks and progress to F1 seats this season. Michel is impressed by Wolff's reaction to the Monza crash and believes that Antonelli can make the most of having a frontrunning car at his disposal.

"Kimi is an incredible talent, so when he got to F1 and he did the FP1 in Monza and he crashed, it happens, you know," shrugs Michel. "There's nothing you can say about that. It was the first time he got in the car. Toto had a fantastic reaction. He said, 'No worries. You know, it's OK.' Not starting to put more pressure.

"I think they need to know how to manage the pressure, that's for sure. Kimi, of course, arrived in a team with a car that's going to be in the top of Formula 1. So he's got to deliver. And this is compared to George, who has been with Mercedes for quite a long time. I'm sure the other rookies that are coming into F1, they would love to have a great car."

Another of Michel's F2 pool who made the full-time step up as a rookie this year is Ollie Bearman, the Haas driver who was Antonelli's team-mate at Prema Racing last season.

"I know him very well from last year in Formula 2 and we pushed each other forward and had a tough season together, but what was clear was his speed," states 20-year-old Bearman. "So I had no doubt about him getting into Formula 1. Of course, he's up against a great team-mate and a very quick one, but he's already very close to George. But like I said, I'm not surprised. I think it's only a matter of time. He's very talented."

Unperturbed by the Parabolica write-off while the ink was still drying on Antonelli's F1 contract, Mercedes ran him in free practice in Mexico and again at the post-season test in Abu Dhabi. By that point, Hamilton had raced his last grand prix for a team at which he won six of his seven drivers' crowns, and >>



Wolff says Antonelli is rewarding faith put in him

MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP PAG



MAUGER

Mercedes didn't make a drama out of Monza crash



SUTTON/FORMULA 1

Ex-Prema team-mate Bearman rates him highly

“Kimi arrived in a team with a car that’s going to be in the top of F1. So he’s got to deliver”



Antonelli made history with Miami sprint race pole

BAGNALL/SUTTON



SUTTON/FORMULA1

Russell praises quality of Antonelli's start to season



POREZYCKI/NURPHOTO

Antonelli concedes he didn't handle Imola pressure well

"Of course, he's learning week in, week out, so I'm excited to see how he progresses"



Mercedes sees Miami breakthrough as vindication of its choice

TRIBALLEAU/AFP

Antonelli was ramping up preparations to continue his own career, keen to stress that he did not see himself as the second coming.

"I don't find it right to say I'm his replacement," he said of Hamilton. "He has done so much in the sport, and I just feel like the next Mercedes driver, and I really want to make my own story. Definitely, racing for Mercedes is a big responsibility because it's obviously a top team, but at the same time it's a great opportunity, it's a privilege to be where I am today. I'm just trying to make the best out of this."

Antonelli went on to finish fourth on his F1 race debut at the Australian GP, and took seventh and sixth respectively in the sprint and grand prix in China. But it was in Japan where he arguably showed what he might ultimately be capable of. He may have only finished sixth, with Verstappen's stunning display grabbing the headlines, but Antonelli broke two records in the process, becoming the youngest driver in F1 history to lead a lap and set the fastest lap.

If that was a glimpse of the ability waiting to be harnessed, Antonelli delivered an all-out preview in the United States. He had looked rapid throughout Friday afternoon's sprint qualifying session in Miami, and his late run of 1m26.482s was enough to withstand a last-ditch effort by McLaren duo Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris.

The lap led to the explosion of joy on the Antonelli side of the Mercedes garage. As well as his pat on the back from Russell, the Italian had his father, Marco, present and later enjoyed an emotional phone call with his mother back home. "We are one family," Antonelli Sr smiled. "We transmit that in life, you need to work, always. Very hard and not complain before you understand. We are a normal family that works every day. And I think that Kimi understood this, and this [result] is a very big pleasure for us."

Wolff, in his own way of approaching the achievement, was quick to call out Antonelli's detractors, while also keeping the celebrations to a minimum. "There were a lot of voices, even within the sport, suggesting he should have a preparation year at Williams or somewhere similar," he said. "But for us it was clear: we wanted to give him that year of preparation within our own team, so that he'd

be ready for next year when the new regulations come in and he already knows all the circuits.

"We always said there would be mistakes. But he's kept developing steadily and hasn't made those errors, though they will come at some point. But the mileage he's put in is now paying off, and that's what's allowing him to perform at this level."

For his part, Russell has taken over from Hamilton in terms of being leader of the team and has enjoyed his own fine start to a season in which McLaren has the fastest car and Verstappen is still wrangling plenty out of his Red Bull. Now in his seventh season in F1 – and his fourth with Mercedes – Russell insists he has not been caught out by Antonelli's displays, and that he was well aware of the talk surrounding him: "I had high expectations because I know how good he is. The performances we've seen from him, especially the first race in Melbourne, weren't a surprise to me, but may have been a surprise to others.

"He's an exceptional driver, working exceptionally hard, and Formula 1 isn't easy, but in terms of pure speed he's definitely got it. Of course, he's learning week in, week out, so I'm excited to see how he progresses throughout the season. I think he knows that he's got a lot more in the locker to bring, and I know as well that the experience that I have now after seven years, he's not going to have that [yet].

"So I know that he's going to be bringing more performance throughout the season, but I don't think he could have hoped for a much more rounded start."

Antonelli's Imola weekend, one where he would have wanted to banish any lingering ghosts from his huge shunt at Monza, was his worst in F1 so far. He struggled for pace and only managed to qualify in 13th with a laptime almost a second off Russell's Q3 effort. Then he was forced to retire from the race with a throttle issue. What it gave to Antonelli, though, was a lesson that the step from F2 to F1 comes with fresh challenges off the track as well as on it.

"I think they learn in F3 and they learn in F2 how to manage the pressure, but in Formula 1 it's completely different because the exposure is much bigger, the visibility," points out Michel.

With Antonelli recently featuring in his own Netflix documentary, interest in him reached fever pitch at his home grand prix, and after the race he conceded that the added interest could have played a part in how the weekend worked out. "I absolutely love the support of the fans – I just think on my side I didn't manage the energy that well, and that definitely compromised the performance on track," he admitted. "But it was a really good lesson, because I could feel it. I was not as relaxed; I was a bit more tense while driving. So ahead of the next home race, it was a really good lesson."

Monaco was next up for Antonelli and it proved to be consecutive tough weekends as he ended up in the barrier at the Nouvelle chicane in qualifying and starting 15th before Williams's blocking and Mercedes' questionable strategy saw him finish a lowly 18th. Life, especially at the top, comes at you fast – but overall Antonelli seems to be quick enough to cope. ✨



Dad Marco was on hand to celebrate in Miami

I WANNA BE ELECTED

Double world rally champion Carlos Sainz has thrown his hat into the ring for the FIA presidential election this December, challenging the incumbent, Mohammed Ben Sulayem. But what's really at stake, and who has the numbers on their side?

STUART CODLING

PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES

Running world motorsport's governing body is often a thankless task. Formula 1 alone has been a febrile web of commercial challenges, political dissent and clandestine manoeuvrings for decades now.

And yet, despite the criticism faced by every recent president going back to the days of Jean-Marie Balestre, rarely has an incumbent candidate been opposed (see panel, pages 50-51). All of them have stepped aside at the end of their terms. Balestre himself was manoeuvred aside into a different role rather than defeated in a vote by Max Mosley, who then enjoyed four terms – unopposed each time.

That may be about to change now Carlos Sainz, twice a world rally champion, has announced his intention to run against Mohammed Ben Sulayem in the next presidential election this December. It's understood that at least one other potential candidate is considering their options too.

But this is not a popularity contest, and there is a reason why so many sitting presidents have gone unchallenged. The FIA's election rules are positively Byzantine in their complexity, setting out many mathematical obstacles that are difficult for challenger candidates to navigate.

It's also fair to say that many previous presidents have quietly pulled up the ladder to block opposition.

IT'S COMPLICATED

It's important to recognise – and for many of those trapped in the F1 'bubble' this will be a difficult cognitive Rubicon to cross – that F1 is far from the be-all and end-all of the FIA's business. Its primary remit as an association of national automobile clubs is to advocate for motoring matters and road safety. For decades, setting and enforcing the rules for motorsport was the responsibility of a separate body within the wider organisation until Mosley consolidated operations

(and elections) in his first term.

To even run for president, a potential candidate must demonstrate a provable global support base. It is not a matter of filling in an application form and lodging a deposit. Rightly so from a rational perspective, although the maths required militates against potential challengers.

Besides themselves, the presidential candidate requires a full team (or 'list') of FIA members on their ticket, supporting them exclusively: a putative president of the senate, a deputy president and seven vice-presidents for sport, and a deputy president for automobile, mobility and tourism. Of the vice-presidents, there must be two from Europe and one each from Africa, Asia-Pacific, North America, South America, and the Middle-East and North Africa regions.

While this ensures any potential presidential candidate must demonstrate global support, the fact that the FIA statutes demand members must declare themselves for just one candidate (they cannot appear on more than one 'list') adds to the challenge of assembling a bid. An incumbent president could block challengers by gaining the total support of just one region – when David Ward called off his challenge to Jean Todt in 2013 (see panel), he did so because 11 of the 12 North American auto clubs had pledged support to Todt several months earlier.

From there, the numbers game continues into the election itself. The FIA has 245 member organisations drawn from 149 countries. Each country gets 24 votes although these are split between the mobility clubs and sporting clubs – and some countries have more than one mobility club, whereas others have a single club covering both sport and mobility. Therefore some carry more weight than others.

Historically the voting patterns have much in common with the annual Eurovision Song Contest in that friends and neighbours align on preferred candidates. »

Sainz has a lot of hoops to jump through in a face off with Ben Sulayem



DUNBAR



BRATIC/MORGESE/NURPHOTO

F1 drivers have gripes about stewarding inconsistencies and the crackdown on swearing

So it is a tricky landscape to navigate – one likely to become more complicated if changes to the FIA statutes, due to be voted on by the General Assembly at a meeting after this edition of Autosport went to press, come into effect. First reported by the BBC a week after Sainz announced his intention to run, these include changes to the eligibility of candidates for the presidency – including a proposal concerning “professional integrity”. This has been widely regarded as being aimed at Sainz, since his son is an active participant in the F1 World Championship, which could be interpreted as a conflict of interest.

There is also a proposal to bring forward the deadline for candidates to announce their ‘list’, from 21 days before the election to 49 days.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Very few FIA presidents could claim to be uniformly popular and Ben Sulayem has encountered several bumps in the road, some of his own making. One of his first tasks (in the F1 world at least) when he was appointed as president at the end of 2021 was to clean up the mess left by that season's finale, in which race director Michael Masi deviated from the rules in order to stage a green-flag finish after a late safety car, but in doing so affected the outcome of the drivers' title.

For the most part Ben Sulayem has rubbed along well with the other stakeholders, despite some ructions with the teams and F1 itself over the invitation to tender for an 11th position on the grid. The drivers, though, have repeatedly complained about what they see as inconsistency in terms of stewarding guidelines, and pettifogging issues such as jewellery and choice of vocabulary being the subject of direct interventions from the top. There have also been inexplicable firings, such as the dismissal of F1 race director Niels Wittich last year.

But, again, the goldfish bowl of F1 is but one of many smaller elements in the broader scope of the FIA's activities. When Ben Sulayem took over as president, the FIA was running at a double-digit financial loss; it has recently reported an operating profit of €4.7million. Ben Sulayem has also led initiatives to boost participation in karting and other grassroots motorsports, encourage

more women to participate in motor racing, and to curb online abuse of race officials (this on top of establishing an official ‘pathway’ for stewards and race directors).

There have also been questions raised about historic demeaning remarks made about women, and a move towards centralisation of power. When Ben Sulayem was campaigning, his manifesto included the appointment of a CEO to oversee the FIA's activities and run the governing body like a business, with all the transparency that entails.

That CEO, Natalie Robyn, quit after 18 months. In the wake of Robert Reid's recent resignation from his deputy president of sport role, Robyn went on record for the first time, saying: “During my tenure as CEO, I worked under challenging circumstances to strengthen the federation's governance framework and upgrade its operational transparency.

“The resignation of the deputy president of sport clearly indicates there are serious ongoing structural challenges. When professional processes are not adhered to and stakeholders are excluded from decision-making, it undermines the foundation of a strong organisation.”

Reid's resignation statement spoke of “a fundamental breakdown in governance standards within motorsport's global governing body”.

Critics of the current regime cast Ben Sulayem as a martinet who dislikes dissent and has become paranoid about leaks – among the bones of contention has been the introduction of new confidentiality agreements, which Motorsport UK chairman David Richards described as “a gagging order”. Another peculiar development has been the announcement that the FIA would be taking the promotion of the World Rallycross Championship in-house – a breach of the separation between church and state that has prevailed since the governing body was investigated by the EU's Competitions Commission 25 years ago.

These questions will be mulled behind closed doors – and, of course, in public via the inevitable leaks – over the coming months. Provided Sainz actually comes up with a ‘list’, officially puts his hat into the ring, and weathers the inevitable questions about conflict of interest. If not, one of the other putative candidates waiting to see which way the wind is blowing might step out of the shadows... ❁



THE CHALLENGERS

It's rare indeed for an incumbent president to be challenged in an election. When Max Mosley replaced Jean-Marie Balestre in 1993, Mosley was already the president of FISA (the FIA's sporting arm, then separate) and had been so for two years; he persuaded Balestre to step aside and accept the role of chairman of the yet-to-be-formed FIA Senate.

Mosley's strategy of offering to do the job for free and stand for re-election a year later



Left: Sainz Sr's son being an active Formula 1 driver could be perceived as a conflict of interest

Above: Ben Sulayem's bailiwick also includes motoring matters and road safety (below)



swung the numbers towards him and his only challenger, Royal Automobile Club vice-president Jeffrey Rose, withdrew before a vote was cast.

Given how polarising Mosley was, it's remarkable to reflect that he was re-elected unopposed for four terms, and survived a vote of no confidence in 2008 after his sexual peccadillos were revealed in a Sunday newspaper. Four years earlier he had

“MOSLEY THREW HIS WEIGHT BEHIND TODT'S CAMPAIGN”

theatrically announced his resignation, only to rescind it within a month, saying the FIA Senate and member clubs had bombarded him with messages begging him to stay.

After stepping down in 2009, Mosley threw his weight behind Jean Todt's campaign and did his utmost to scupper the opposing candidate, Ari Vatanen. At the next set of elections, Todt faced something no recent incumbent had

encountered before: a challenger.

David Ward quit his post as director general of the FIA Institute and announced his intention to run in August 2013, setting out a manifesto of reforming FIA governance, including the appointment of a CEO to look after motorsport affairs (sound familiar?). But, like Rose before him, he ultimately withdrew – in this case because Todt had moved the goalposts in terms of how many regional vice-presidents were required to support his candidacy.



ALESI IS REUNITED WITH HIS DREAM RACER

The Tyrrell 018 in which Jean Alesi scored points on his F1 debut was his to enjoy again for an emotional run at Paul Ricard. The car that was pivotal in his career also holds an important place in the British team's history

DAMIEN SMITH

New sponsor, a change of driver. Camel tobacco money is a welcome fillip for minnow Tyrrell and its previously plain blue 018. But it means Marlboro-backed Michele Alboreto – the team's last grand prix winner from way back in 1983 – can make his excuses and leave mid-season. Incoming is some French-Sicilian chap who is doing good things in Formula 3000 with Eddie Jordan's Camel-backed Reynard. But Ken Tyrrell has little idea what he should expect from blue-eyed Jean Alesi.

He's quick. That much is obvious from Friday's sessions. But traffic catches him out on Saturday and he lines up for his maiden grand prix down in 16th. That's OK: he's far enough back to avoid the first-corner carnage caused by Mauricio Gugelmin's aerobatics in his Leyton House. That's more than can be said for the other Tyrrell of Jonathan Palmer. From the start, Palmer soldiers on with undertray damage, while Alesi flies... in a good way. He runs second for a while to leader Alain Prost, before Riccardo Patrese and Nigel Mansell come past. Still, fourth on his grand prix debut. A star is born.

"It was just an opportunity," Alesi reflects today of the 1989 French Grand Prix. "When you are a young driver you don't care about anything other than reaching the point of your dream, which is F1. In my mind when I did Paul Ricard I thought, 'If everything goes well I'll stop F3000.' After the GP I had the opportunity to continue. But when I said to Eddie, 'Thank you so much for your help, now I will just concentrate on F1', he was really upset: 'You have to f***** win this championship, then do what you want!' We had a big argument... In the end I won the F3000 championship one race early, which was fantastic. A big gift I was able to give to Eddie."

Alesi is speaking to us after an emotional reunion with both the Eddie Jordan Racing Reynard and the newly

restored Tyrrell 018/2 you see here, back at Paul Ricard for the Historic French GP. "The Tyrrell 018 is my dream car," Alesi gushes, reflecting on his demo laps. "It was the car in which I did my first GP, after which I did 200 more. It made my life. This car was like a glove, it fitted really well and driving it again brought back a lot of memories. I was only disturbed because they put an extra dash readout on the steering wheel, with shift lights. We didn't have that with Uncle Ken!"

James Hanson's Speedmasters is the current guardian of chassis 018/2 – Alesi's 1989 French GP mount – and also the sister 018/1. It's a welcome revival for an important model that briefly checked Tyrrell's sad decline into makeweight backmarker. The final season of the 1980s represented a key F1 turning point, too – one that Ken Tyrrell had lobbied for and now grabbed with relish. Gone were 'superpower' high-boost, small-capacity turbos, in favour of a return to good old rev-happy, eardrum-piercing natural aspiration. A new generation of 3.5-litre V8s, V10s and V12s were harnessed to a grid of shrink-wrapped, aerodynamically svelte missiles. Among the prettiest, and most effective comparative to its budget, was the elegant Tyrrell 018.

The team had gained a head start on the new era by ditching its unloved Renault turbo after just one season. For 1987, a Cosworth DFZ, familiar as an evolution of the previously ubiquitous DFV around which Tyrrell's F1 world had been built, powered the team to the one-off Colin Chapman Cup for non-turbo squads – and a revitalising sixth in the overall constructors' standings – while Jonathan Palmer claimed the associated Jim Clark Trophy for drivers. But the rot set back in during 1988. Palmer scored just five points and new team-mate Julian Bailey qualified only six times in a recalcitrant 017B. >>



Memories come rushing back
for Alesi on reacquaintance
with car that “made my life”



Alesi ran as high as
second on his F1 debut

SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES



CAHIER/GETTY IMAGES



Palmer got caught up in Ricard start
crash, then his season unravelled

RONDEAU/GETTY IMAGES

“IT WAS UNIQUE. IF YOU HAD THE CONFIDENCE TO GO INTO THE CORNER WITH HIGH ENERGY, YOU WERE ABSOLUTELY FAST”

That's why a new broom swept through the team's Ockham woodyard in the summer of 1988. Maurice Philippe, designer of the revered Lotus 72 and a Tyrrell mainstay since 1978, was out. Incoming from Ferrari was ex-Hesketh, Wolf and Fittipaldi designer Harvey Postlethwaite, along with his aerodynamicist friend and ally Jean-Claude Migeot. The duo left Ferrari in the wake of founder Enzo's death in August 1988, departing because of “political reasons”, according to Migeot. “I trusted Harvey,” says Migeot of his friend who died in 1999. “Tyrrell in 1988 was quite a disaster. But Harvey and I had such a good relationship within Ferrari and had shared many ideas without being able to realise them. So I said, ‘OK, I’m going with you.’ Leaving Italy for England was a shock, but working at Tyrrell was magic. My two and a half years there were the best of my life.”

They arrived to find a team in transition, with a new factory in build. “We worked in a Portakabin,” recalls Migeot. “The famous wood shed [in which Jackie Stewart's championship-winning Tyrrells had been built in the early 1970s] was still being used, but now for storage. It was still there with the famous board: ‘Keep out. This means you!’” The Tyrrell 018 was born from seeds sown in Maranello. “We did the 018 from what we already had in mind,” adds Migeot. “It could have been a red Ferrari.”

The car featured an on-trend high airbox and a slimline nose that housed a front suspension innovation: a novel single damper within the double wishbone layout. The so-called mono shock was mounted just ahead of the instrument panel and operated via a transverse rocker and pushrods. A double wishbone pushrod arrangement featured at the waisted rear, within which a new Tyrrell-designed six-speed manual gearbox was longitudinally mounted ahead of the rear axle, driving a Brian Hart-tuned Cosworth DFR V8.

The Tyrrell 019 that followed in 1990 broke new ground thanks to its anhedral front wing and raised nose Migeot had first devised five years earlier during wind tunnel tests at Renault. But the foundation for his most famous creation was rooted in the 018: “I was already thinking about what would be the 019 but there was no way we could risk to do something radical. So the 018 was mechanically simple – except one thing and that is the mono shock. It was the only thing we decided to risk.”

Palmer was retained for a third consecutive season in 1989, while Ken Tyrrell was delighted to snap up Alboreto who, like Postlethwaite and Migeot, had found himself surplus to requirements at Ferrari.

The team began the season in Brazil with the 017B before a lone 018 was rushed from the factory to the second round at Imola. On home ground, Alboreto was initially handed chassis 018/1 for the model's grand prix debut – only for the Italian to suffer the humiliation of failing to qualify. That allowed Tyrrell to switch Palmer,

who had just squeaked onto the grid in the 017B in 25th, into the 018 for the race – in which he scored a point for sixth place. In 018/2, Alboreto shook off his Imola dismay to score vital points for Tyrrell at Monaco, finishing fifth. Then in Mexico, Alboreto qualified seventh and raced to third, behind only Ayrton Senna's McLaren and Patrese's Williams. It would be the last podium of his F1 career.

Migeot says Alboreto was “uncomfortable” with the mono shock front suspension because it made the car “so direct and reactive”. They worked hard to make the car more driveable and finally found a solution – but too late for Alboreto following his sponsor-related departure. “The car was very stiff at the start, we didn't understand we could introduce flexibility into the rocker,” explains Migeot. “But when Jean Alesi came he loved that quality or problem, depending on your perspective, because the way the car was going into the corner suited his style.”

“It was unique,” states Alesi. “You had a very positive front end, so the car was very sharp going into the corner and then it had a solid support, a very stiff front [roll]bar. If you had the confidence to go into the corner with high energy, you were absolutely fast. That was my driving style. When I drove the car I couldn't have something better than that.”

Migeot says that Alesi's on-point style masked the car's knife-edge handling trait until it ran in the wet at Spa. “It was so undriveable in those conditions we understood we had to do something,” Migeot explains. “Harvey had included a very stiff Belleville spring on each side of the front mono rocker, but never thought to use it to tune the car as a front anti-roll bar. Now he found a rubber O-ring which could be squeezed in. The car became instantly easy in the wet and was all understeer on a dry track. >>



PETER SUMMERS

“WHEN SENNA CAME I KNEW I HAD NO CHANCE, BUT I SAID, ‘OK, LET’S TRY TO HAVE A GOOD TIME WITH HIM’”

In one lap we proved to ourselves not only the mono shock was not a mistake, but that we were stupid enough to have the best set-up parameter on board and had not been using it! From then on setting up the car was so easy and quick. We could have made the car good for Michele had he stayed for longer.”

Migeot recalls his and Postlethwaite's initial alarm at the prospect of the relatively unknown Alesi stepping in at Ricard. That was wiped away by the star debut. “Because we were both French we became very close,” says Migeot. “‘This is an English team, you have to speak in English.’ That was Ken! But I got on very well with Jean in terms of understanding what he was saying about the car. I was able to translate to improve the set-up. He was very young. A big talent, sometimes too emotional, very difficult to keep him cold when things went wrong. But one of the best drivers I worked with.”

Through the rest of the season, Alesi used 018/2 to further his F1 experience at Silverstone, Hockenheim and the Hungaroring, then added more points with a fifth place at Monza. He missed the Belgian and Portuguese GPs to win Jordan his F3000 title, with Johnny Herbert playing substitute. Herbert too had finished fourth on his grand prix debut, in Rio for Benetton at the start of 1989, but had been dropped because he was still recovering from devastating foot injuries incurred in his F3000 crash at Brands Hatch in August 1988. Now given a brief lifeline by Tyrrell, Herbert made little impression in his two appearances for the team. Alesi was back for the Spanish GP in chassis 018/5 and scored more points in fourth.

Meanwhile, Palmer found himself spiralling to what would be the end of his F1 career. Following his sixth at Imola, the Briton continued with chassis 018/1, coming close to scoring again at Phoenix. He was running fourth on the Arizona street circuit until, six laps from the finish, he ran out of fuel, to be classified an eventual ninth. The chassis' last GP appearance was as Palmer's car at the pivotal Paul Ricard race. Alesi's debut proved the beginning of the end for his team-mate.

Migeot remains perplexed by Palmer's unravelling across the 1989 season: “Jonathan loved the car and was very fast, but he lost his talent when he met Jean. The young chap was faster than him at the second race and he couldn't understand. At the penultimate race [Suzuka] he qualified slowest, then didn't qualify at all for the last one [in Adelaide]. It was amazing because he was a very fast guy, and very bright with his engineering background. I don't know, it must have been psychological.”

As Palmer departed, Tyrrell could reflect on a season of stark improvement. From just eight starts, Alesi had scored eight points to finish a fine ninth in the drivers' championship. Tyrrell was fifth in the constructors', its best placing since 1979.

Encouraged, Postlethwaite and Migeot pushed on. “The

018 and 019 are the same car mechanically,” says Migeot. “The rear of the car, including the gearbox, is absolutely identical. The front is of course completely different.”

He then drops in that the 018 featured another clever piece of innovation, beyond its mono shock suspension, that carried over to the 1990 car: “We had an active actuator on the front powered by a small battery under the seat. The ride height could be adjusted by the driver through this. This is something nobody has discovered, although we were not the only ones using such technology at the time. The driver could change from corner to corner if he wanted. Jean wasn't able to use it much... but you can imagine someone like Michael Schumacher would have changed it every corner.”

Into the new season, the 018's competitive life was prolonged as its successor was readied. Alesi famously battled Ayrton Senna for victory in Phoenix, where new Tyrrell signing Satoru Nakajima scored a point in sixth driving 018/2. No wonder Alesi recalls Phoenix 1990 with much affection.

“Of course it was a surprise for everyone, but also for me,” he reckons. “I enjoyed it so much. When I turned in for the first corner in P1, in my mind I was thinking about my friends watching the race on TV and dreamed to have at least one lap leading. In the end I led half of the race [34 of 72 laps]. When Senna came I knew I had no chance, but I said, ‘OK, let's try to have a good time with him’ – and that's what I did. Afterwards, we talked. He was very curious about the technology of other cars. My car was lighter than his at the beginning so he had no chance to follow me, because with the V10 he had much more fuel to carry. He said it had been ‘a good fight’. He enjoyed the race. In the press conference he said, ‘I had a tough winter and to start the championship like this gives me some goodwill for the rest of the season.’”

The 018 signed off in Rio (Nakajima finishing eighth), before the 019 and its ground-breaking front end caused a stir on its debut at Imola.

Migeot cherishes his happy memories of his seasons at Tyrrell in 1989 and 1990, before he was lured back to Ferrari. “In 1990 we had a very good time disturbing the big teams, especially with the Pirelli tyres – which were the wrong choice, by the way!” he laughs. “Those tyres meant the car was s*** for the races! You want to finish races, not qualify well. In that respect 1990 was not that good, it should have been a lot better. With Goodyear we would have finished in the points regularly.”

“Ken Tyrrell was fantastic, he was my hero. He had a huge knowledge, especially how to teach drivers. That's what he enjoyed with Jean. He was passionate to understand and to trust people. He raced to have fun and it was fantastic when you can get both together. It's always said Tyrrell was a family team, which is true – but it was a professional family too.” ✎

CAHIER/GETTY IMAGES



Alesi made Senna work
for 1990 Phoenix win



End of turbo era gave
Tyrrell fighting chance

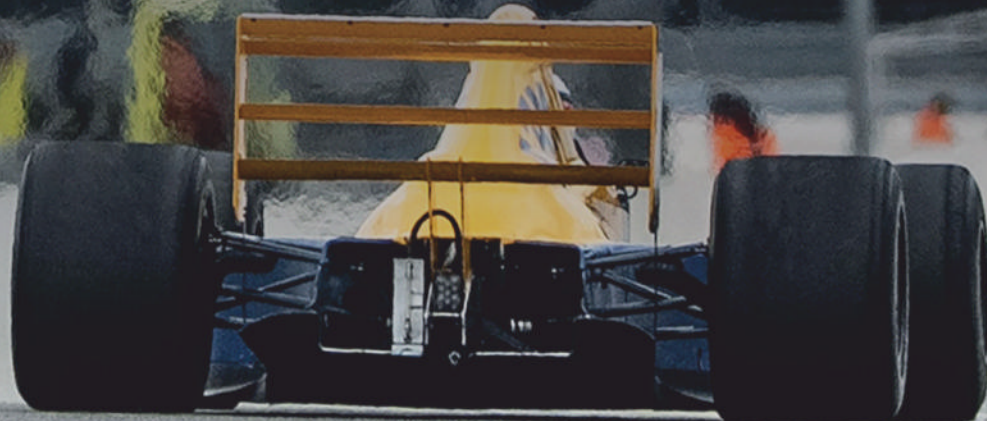
JEP



Alesi revelled in 018's
super-stiff front end

JEP

*Back where it all began for Alesi –
although there were no shift
lights in days of Uncle Ken*



MAURICE HAMILTON'S

ALTERNATIVE VIEW

At Alpine, it's a case of cometh the hour, cometh the man for Flavio Briatore

Who cares if Flavio Briatore isn't recognised as Alpine team principal? The important point is that he's there. You may not approve of the wild-haired man who gabbles in unintelligible English, but the controversy that surrounded him in the past is also part of his F1 credentials today. He's been there and done it – in every sense. Some of his methods may have been outlandish but, for a team losing leaders as often as Ferrari replaces one tacky livery with another, Briatore is as good as it gets. In some ways, he's better than that.

His CV, covering world championships for Michael Schumacher (with Benetton) and Fernando Alonso (Renault), turned into a charge sheet when Briatore allegedly signed off Nelson Piquet Jr deliberately crashing during the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix. The tactic (to trigger a safety car and help Alonso on his way to a victory that was rare at the time) was as clumsy as Piquet's staged loss of control. Briatore received a lifetime ban from the FIA, the penalty being rescinded when a high court (in France, no less) cleared him of any involvement in an incident that has become known as 'Crashgate'.

Briatore moved on to run a high-end fashion chain and a couple of nightclubs and restaurants. In 2013, I interviewed him over dinner at Cipriani's in Monaco. He said he kept in touch with the sport and followed the races, but he had no intention of returning to F1. That changed in 2024 when he became 'Executive Advisor' at Renault/Alpine.

This was nothing new. Briatore had said farewell to F1 in October 1997 after masterminding Benetton's expansion from global knitwear icon to Formula 1 world champion. His departure received mixed notices; you were either delighted or saddened, depending on the manner in which your path had crossed the Italian's.

I had got off on the wrong foot after Flavio sacked Johnny Herbert during the 1989 season. When I called on behalf of my newspaper to indignantly ask why, Briatore said: "Because he is sick. I have no experience of motor racing. But I see that every driver in F1 has two legs. Johnny has only one... if you know what I mean. [A reference to Herbert's severe ankle injuries inflicted by his Brands Hatch crash during an F3000 race the previous year]. So, what do you do? Do you keep him? No, because it is a danger for him as well. That's the way it is." Despite Herbert's frustration and the British media's outrage at the time, Johnny would later agree it had been a correct if – no pun intended – painful decision. His F1 debut had indeed

been premature because of the substantial injury.

Briatore brought a new dimension to F1. It was called irreverence. The cap with the peak turned back to front, the year-round tan and the ever-present cigarette may have upset one or two members of the self-important establishment, but this trademark soon became acceptable to many.

The carefully palmed ciggy often got him into trouble. He countered that by having a smoking sign made for his pitwall pass; it actually worked on several occasions when confronted by bewildered officials trying to follow the letter of the pitlane law. (Had Mohammed Ben Sulayem been around, Briatore would presumably have been reprimanded by a press release no one could fully understand and retracted a week later.)

Briatore cuts a subdued figure today compared to the constant source of entertainment provided back in the day. I'm thinking of Osaka airport early on the morning after the 1995 Japanese GP. Benetton had just won the championship and the team, with Flavio leading the way, had been up all night. You could tell that by his permanent grin and dishevelled state at first class check-in, the denim shirt hanging outside the jeans (a mode of dress yet to come into fashion) and the blue cap in its usual position. He later took great pleasure in joining us in the coffee shop, then flitting in and out of the first class lounge, wherein sat the immaculately creased and pressed owner of a team that had not enjoyed a particularly good season. I don't recall too many of us rushing to hold him back.

He feigned roguish innocence when I recalled this in 2013. He was less reticent about expanding his views on the basics of Formula 1 and its purpose. "It's completely crazy," he said. "The teams talk about having 170 people doing aerodynamics. It's not the drivers' world championship. It's the wind tunnel world championship. You are spending a fortune channelling air up and down, and this and that. OK, if you want to play around, you play around with the wings – like in our time.

"He had a smoking sign made for his pitwall pass; it actually worked on several occasions"

Now you have telemetry from the factory. This is ridiculous. You need to have 30 people in the factory supporting the race. It's completely mad!

"Look," he continued, "nobody outside the teams cares. They [F1] talk about engines and the importance of linking with road cars. When we won a championship, nobody asked how many cylinders we had. All they wanted to talk about was the *spettacolo* through the race. If it costs a team \$50,000 or \$100million, the spectator doesn't care. OK, the income a team has is very important. But however much money you get, you spend. If you tell people the budget is 10, the next day it is already spent."

I don't know if Briatore holds similar views today. But I can't say I disagree with him now any more than I did then – regardless of the title he may or may not have. ✽



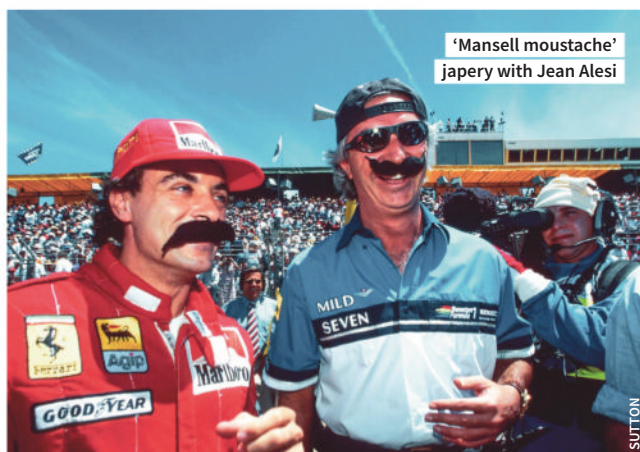
SUTTON/FORMULA 1

The Italian cuts a more subdued figure these days



Briatore led the all-nighter after Suzuka 1995 title win

ETHERINGTON



'Mansell moustache' japey with Jean Alesi

SUTTON



THOMPSON

Can Briatore lift Alpine out of the doldrums?



ILLMAN/GETTY IMAGES

IS FERNANDO ALONSO REALLY F1'S UNLUCKIEST DRIVER EVER?

The Spanish double world champion has made some big claims over the years. We thought we'd argue about how the latest one stacks up



PROBABLY NOT, BUT HE HAS A POINT OLEG KARPOV

You do have to give Alonso a bit of leeway for calling himself “the unluckiest driver in the world” – that comment came over team radio, in the heat of the moment.

And he's probably right in saying that the context matters. Still, you wouldn't be entirely wrong to assume that the two-time world champion does sometimes feel that way.

Remember that image from the 2012 Brazilian Grand Prix, just seconds after he stepped out of his Ferrari? Raindrops on the open visor, eyes staring into the void – the look of a man who hadn't just lost a title fight to a rival in superior machinery after delivering an almost flawless

season. Those were the eyes of Alonso, who'd just lost what could possibly have been his fifth world title.

With only a handful of points separating him from becoming one of the most successful drivers in F1 history, it's not hard to understand why Alonso feels he hasn't had the rub of the green. And for a driver of his abilities, he's probably deserving more than he's got out of his F1 career so far.

Is it fair for him to feel unlucky that the McLaren gamble didn't pay off, too? You could argue that his career decisions are what really held him back. But was betting on Honda in 2015 really that much riskier than Lewis Hamilton's move from McLaren to Mercedes in 2013? It's not only about luck – but luck definitely plays a role in those choices.

Calling himself the “unluckiest in the world” might be a bit of a stretch. Still, it's easy to forgive Fernando for thinking that way – especially in the heat of the moment.



LUCK IS THE IDOL OF THE IDLE MARK MANN-BRYANS

You make your own luck, as the saying goes. And, when singling out 2025 as a year in which Alonso claims to be saddled with misfortune, the only place to really

apportion blame is Aston Martin. The team took a huge step backwards last season and has been unable to recover any significant ground this year, with the whole operation now seemingly in a holding pattern until the first Adrian Newey-designed Aston hits the track in 2026.

Alonso insists he does not believe in good luck trinkets, so no rabbit's foot, rosary beads or four-leaf clovers will be in his cockpit for the remainder of his career, but even the Spaniard has acknowledged that Aston has very much put itself in a position to suffer trials and tribulations.

"I don't believe in those things," he said ahead of the Monaco GP. "So it's what we deserve, probably. We've been unlucky many times, I think we've been uncompetitive, which is the unluckiest part of everything. When you're more competitive, any strategy works, any safety car is a small problem, but it's not the end of the day. When you are not competitive, anything that doesn't go your way takes you out of the points."

Aston did make gains at Imola, but the 'bad luck' struck during the race, leading to Alonso's radio exchange. He will know that for his fortunes to change, his car also has to follow suit. Maybe the Alonso/Newey partnership could be all the luck he – and the team – needs.



HE'S HAD GOOD FORTUNE, TOO JACOBO VEGA

There's something Alonso himself often reminds the media: in sport, as in life, luck tends to even itself out. And on this, I have to agree. I don't believe

Fernando is the unluckiest driver in history.

I know drivers who have had worse luck. Of course, he's had his fair share of misfortune – especially at key moments while fighting for titles. Like the 2010 finale in Abu Dhabi, where a somewhat implausible incident triggered a safety car that turned the race upside down – then his team made a mistake more typical of amateurs than professionals. There was the pile-up caused by Romain Grosjean that forced him to retire at Spa in 2012 – and that DNF proved to be title-defining. Or the fact that Sebastian Vettel scored points in the final race of the season with a car that had been badly damaged from first-lap contact with Bruno Senna.

Yet Alonso has also benefited from good fortune. Like when Michael Schumacher's engine failed in Japan 2006, handing him the title on a silver platter. Or the 2010 race in South Korea, where his rivals dropped out one by one. Even some of Kimi Raikkonen's retirements in 2005 played into Alonso's hands, helping him secure his first title.

And as for radio messages... I think all drivers are aware they're being listened to and use the opportunity to send messages when it suits them. Alonso is not the only one. But just as he has a knack for delivering good soundbites in press conferences, the same happens on team radio – it's an art not all drivers handle quite as well.



CHRIS AMON SAYS "HOLD MY BEER" STUART CODLING

If there is such a thing as luck, good or bad, then there remains only one grand prix driver to anoint as the unluckiest: Chris Amon, of whom Mario Andretti once

quipped, "If he was an undertaker, people would stop dying."

He was just 19 when he made his GP debut at Monaco in 1963 – well, he drove Reg Parnell's Lola-Climax in practice before being compelled to hand it over to team-mate Maurice Trintignant, whose car had expired. That set the tone for a season dogged by mechanical issues until a shunt in Italy left him nursing broken ribs. Nevertheless, Amon continued to impress, and McLaren made an approach when the Parnell team was forced to drop him in favour of Richard Attwood as the price of taking a BRM engine supply. Unfortunately, McLaren faced headwinds getting just one car to the F1 grid through 1966 so Amon had to look elsewhere, but missed out on an open seat at Cooper because 1964 champion John Surtees had walked out on Ferrari and was now on the market.

Amon joined Ferrari in 1967. Four podiums followed that season but as Ferrari's fortunes headed south, so too did Amon's mojo. Had he stuck it out, he might have been fighting Jochen Rindt for the title in 1970 but, despairing over the flat-12 engine's unreliability, he left – for March, another bad idea. Ditto the sonorous but not always quick Matras that followed; he should have won the 1972 French GP but picked up a puncture...



PHIPPS/GETTY IMAGES



To watch a video of this debate go to
[youtube.com/
@AutosportOfficial](https://youtube.com/@AutosportOfficial)





ALEX ALBON

The Williams driver on spicy food, golf duels with Carlos Sainz and his ever-growing camera collection

OLEG KARPOV

PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES

GOLF

It started casually, before I met my girlfriend and before COVID. At the time, I just liked being outdoors and doing something relaxing. I think every guy secretly loves golf! I used to play with George Russell early on, but he's stopped since. Now I play more regularly, and I'd say I've improved a lot. Carlos Sainz is probably the best golfer on the grid, but the last time we played – just a month ago – we were surprisingly even. I was having a good day!



BECKER

ANIMALS

I've always loved animals. My family has quite a few – as most people probably know – but I don't keep any pets in Monaco right now. I travel too much and it wouldn't be fair. But once I settle down, I'll definitely get my own. Likely a dog – something portable that could travel with me. I'm also passionate about animal charities and hope to get more involved in the future.

CHARITY WORK

I still support an orphanage in Thailand, and I'm looking to do more meaningful projects soon. We're planning something special around the Singapore Grand Prix with local charities. I feel a real sense of responsibility. I've been very lucky with my life and career, and I want to give back – especially in Thailand, where the wealth divide is so stark and many kids grow up without proper support.



GALLOWAY



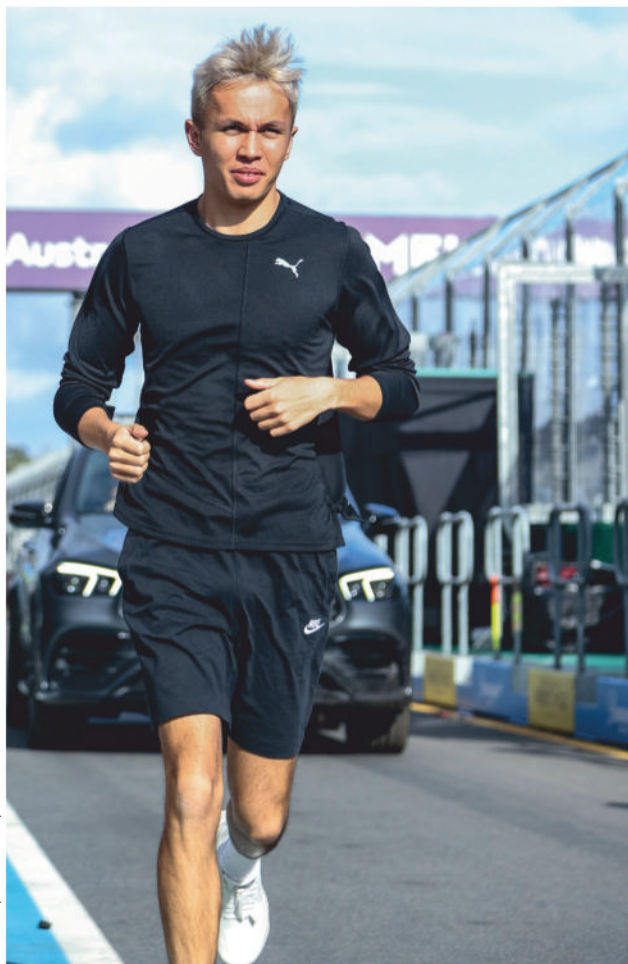
RAHMAN/AFP

KARTING

Karting is something I've really embraced again this year. I'm doing it regularly – before and after races, just to keep sharp. I've got a kart near Monaco and others available elsewhere too. It's the best mental training you can get outside of an F1 car. Gearbox karts are so fast and reactive that you have to be thinking further ahead than even in an F2 car.

FITNESS

I wouldn't call training a hobby, but it's a big part of my life. This year's calendar has been so packed that it's been tough to stay in shape. I got quite sick after China, and it took a lot of effort to get back on track. Now I try to fit in little training camps around the world, using the gaps we do get. It's about maximising fitness in short windows.



HITCHENS/SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET

PHOTOGRAPHY

I love photography – especially film. I have a growing collection of cameras, though these days I mostly use a Fujifilm X100 because it's so convenient when travelling. I take a lot of pictures during race weekends and post them on Instagram. I don't develop film myself – there's a place in Monaco that sends it to Paris, which takes weeks – but one day I'd love to learn how to do it properly.



FUJIFILM

YOUTUBE

I prefer YouTube over Netflix. It's a bit more casual and easier to enjoy when travelling. I love watching food vlogs and random stuff – it's my downtime. I have my go-to channels, and it's how I relax after long days.

GAMING

Gaming has always been a passion of mine. I don't have as much time for it now, but I still love it. I've got a great PC that I mainly use for sim racing, but it's ready for GTA 6 when that finally drops. During COVID I gamed a lot with friends – story modes, *Cyberpunk 2077*, that sort of thing. I even had a portable gaming device for travel. These days I'm doing more sim racing, but the love for gaming is still there.



ARRIENS/NURPHOTO

FOOD

I'm a big foodie. Being half-Asian, I naturally lean toward spicy and Asian cuisine. One of the things I prioritise during race weekends is making sure we enjoy some good meals. Sunday nights are usually when we go out – with my girlfriend, my coach, my manager. I book the restaurants well in advance, and if it's full... well, sometimes I have to name drop!

CLASSIC CARS

I own one classic car – an Alfa Romeo Giulia 2000. It's beautiful and finished in classic red. I haven't actually driven it yet – it's a project car for now. I really admire a company called Alfaholics, which does restorations in the UK. They're like Singer for Porsche. One day, maybe after a good result like a P5 in the constructors', I'll reward myself with one of their builds.



BORD

SINGLE SEATERS





America's greatest race gets underway

The IndyCar field prepares for the start of the 109th running of the Indianapolis 500, led by Prema's surprise poleman Robert Shwartzman and fellow front-row qualifiers Takuma Sato (Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing) and Arrow McLaren's Pato O'Ward. The day wouldn't end particularly well for any of the three, although O'Ward eventually came away with third, while Sato was ninth and rookie Shwartzman classified 26th after too much drama. Ahead of them was Alex Palou, the Chip Ganassi Racing driver taking his Dallara-Honda to victory to cement his place as one of the series' great drivers. Turn the page for our special report.

Photographer Brian Spurlock/
Icon Sportswire/Getty Images

Where Indianapolis, Indiana, USA
When Sunday 25 May 2025

Details Canon EOS R6m2
RF24-105mm lens, 1/1600th @ F6.3



CASTERLINE/GETTY IMAGES



INDYCAR

PALOU PUTS HIS NAME AMONG THE GREATS

Alex Palou's magical 2025 season continued to roll along with a confident victory for Chip Ganassi Racing in the 109th running of the Indianapolis 500. Already a three-time champion in the IndyCar Series, the Spaniard's fifth triumph in six starts this year was by far the most important individual race win of his career, delivering prize money in excess of \$4million and the prestigious honour of claiming the Borg-Warner Trophy in America's most historic and important motor race.

Palou caught 2022 Indy 500 winner Marcus Ericsson by surprise with a decisive pass for the lead on lap 187 of 200. With the leaders bottled up behind a pair of backmarkers, a shootout for the win never developed and the point was rendered moot when Nolan Siegel's crash on the last lap brought out the caution as Palou led Ericsson into the final corner.

Palou, Ericsson and third-place finisher David Malukas were covered by just 1.1426 seconds, with a disappointed Pato O'Ward taking fourth – though his position would improve after the chequered flag.

It was another crushingly competent performance by Palou, who qualified sixth and ran unobtrusively among the leaders all day before taking command at the end to lead the final 14 laps. It was the only time he was out front all day.

"It's amazing to win this race," Palou said after averaging 168.883mph over the 500 miles. "This race means so much for me, for my family, for the IndyCar community, for our fans, and I would say motorsports in general. To say I've won only one oval race, and it was at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, just makes it extra special. I already lost my voice, and I haven't even started celebrating yet."

ALL-TIME GREAT IN THE MAKING

Palou's day contained little drama other than a close call in the cramped pitlane and a couple of scary moments on restarts. He made his final pitstop several laps earlier than Ericsson, and laid back in the opening phase of the stint conserving fuel and tyres before moving past

Malukas. The capacity crowd exceeding 300,000 expected Palou to wait until the very end to try to pass Ericsson for the lead, but the presence of Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing team-mates Louis Foster and Devlin DeFrancesco fighting for 14th place directly in front of them complicated matters.

When Ericsson left an opening into Turn 1, Palou didn't hesitate. "We were not in the best position on strategy," explained the 28-year-old. "We had the worst tyres, and less fuel than Marcus and a little less than Malukas. I knew it was going to be tough at the end and I was just not going to have a chance to overtake him. It was a bit too early to go for it, but I thought it was my best strategy to try to go with the traffic and get the win. I'm glad I made it work."

Now boasting an Indianapolis win and presumably on his way to a fourth IndyCar championship (he has a 115-point lead over O'Ward, with a maximum of 53 points available per race weekend), Palou is already in the conversation about all-time Indy racing superstars.

His Indianapolis victory was the sixth for team owner Chip Ganassi, whose roster of Indy winners includes Ericsson, Scott Dixon, Dario Franchitti and Juan Pablo Montoya. It was also Palou's 16th win in 87 IndyCar championship starts.

"I'll tell you, that kid is a good driver," Ganassi enthused. "It's just incredible – he's on a roll. I think he's one of the greats – it's that simple. Certainly we've had some great drivers on our team, and he's right there, at worst, shoulder to shoulder with all the rest of them. You've got to talk about all the great champions we've had, and he's clearly in that group now."

Ericsson was despondent after his second runner-up finish at Indianapolis in the past three years, those coming on the heels of his 2022 victory in 'The Greatest Spectacle in Racing'. >>



Shwartzman led first eight laps from pole; pit mishap undid his race

GALSTAD/GETTY IMAGES



At one point, a slow pitstop dropped the ex-Formula 1 racer to the tail of the lead lap. But savvy use of yellows and an effective long green-flag stint allowed the Andretti Global team to execute a strategy that gave their driver track position and a four-to-six-lap advantage on fuel and tyres as the race drew to a close. That's when the backmarkers trying to stay on the lead lap came into play.

"I had those lapped cars ahead and I was struggling a little bit in the dirty air," Ericsson recounted. "Alex kind of got a run on me, but I didn't think he was going to go for it. And that's the thing that's going to keep me up at night for a while – that moment and what I did and didn't do. This is a 'winner takes all' kind of race, and I had that race covered," he quietly added. "It's pretty painful."

With a win and a pair of close second-place finishes bookending a forgettable 2024 Month of May in which he nearly failed to qualify and was classified 33rd, Ericsson has experienced every aspect of the Indy 500's emotional roller coaster.

"It stinks," grumbled the Swede. "Second is a good result, but here, it's not a good result. Here, you've got to win."

Things got even worse when Ericsson's car, along with that of team-mate Kyle Kirkwood (which finished sixth), was found to have unapproved modifications of its Energy Management System covers, which are spec parts. They were penalised to 31st and 32nd respectively, while Callum Ilott (originally

12th) was relegated to last after his Prema-run Dallara failed to meet the minimum endplate height and location specification.

Contrary to Palou's near-perfect start to the season, Prema Racing's initial IndyCar campaign in the lead-up to Indianapolis could not have gone much worse, with rookie Robert Shwartzman posting the team's best results with a pair of 18th-place finishes. It was therefore a complete surprise when Shwartzman emerged from the 500's stressful and complicated qualifying weekend with pole position.

ROOKIE POLESITTER'S DREAM

Shwartzman had been sixth fastest for the Italian team on the opening day of qualifying, which was paced by Palou ahead of Team Penske entries driven by Scott McLaughlin and two-time Indianapolis winner Josef Newgarden, the victor in 2024. The Israeli/Russian improved to third on the first of two Sunday qualifying runs, behind Felix Rosenqvist and O'Ward. Then in the final 'Fast Six' session, Shwartzman's 232.790mph average bested another two-time Indy winner, Takuma Sato. O'Ward filled out the front row, with Dixon and Rosenqvist joining Palou on row two.

Shwartzman is the first rookie to take pole at Indianapolis since Teo Fabi in 1983. Ironically, Shwartzman's car carries the number 83 to represent the year Prema was founded. The previous time a first-year team earned the Indy

pole was 1984 with Tom Sneva and Mayer Motor Racing, run by ex-McLaren F1 stalwarts Teddy Mayer and Tyler Alexander.

"Honestly, it's unbelievable – it's just a dream," bubbled Shwartzman. "I was fantasising about what it would be like to win the Indy 500 pole, and then I was like, 'Yeah Robert, get back to reality. You have a new car, new team, you are a rookie. How can you expect to be in this position?'"

"I think the thing that made me sit here now is just the right mentality. You don't need to have incredible experience. You just need to have good people around you as a team, who are conscious of what they are doing."

Shwartzman led the first eight laps of the race, but his remarkable Indy 500 debut unravelled when he locked his brakes entering his box for his second pitstop. The Prema Dallara mowed down four crew members, all of whom fortunately escaped serious injury. Another scary pit incident featured Alexander Rossi's Ed Carpenter Racing entry catching fire from a fuel leak.

The path to pole was made clearer for Shwartzman and Prema by one of Team Penske's worst-ever days at Roger Penske's beloved Indianapolis Motor Speedway. McLaughlin opened practice for the second qualifying day by writing off his car in a big accident. Then the cars of Newgarden and Will Power were flagged in technical inspection for an illegal modification to their attenuator, a Dallara spec part that acts like a bumper in rear impacts.



GALSTAD/GETTY IMAGES

**Penske prospect
Malukas “hanging on
for life” at the close**

Since the start of 2024, IndyCar has required all teams to return their attenuators to Dallara to bond a strengthening plate to the outer surface. Team Penske smoothed down the slightly protruding edge of the added plate, likely as much for aesthetics than to pursue any kind of performance gain.

Penske withdrew the two violating cars from the ‘Fast 12’ session and, under the rulebook, they along with McLaughlin would start from 10th, 11th and 12th on the grid. McLaughlin was not penalised because his crashed car was found to feature a legal attenuator. And, adding a layer of intrigue to the matter, Newgarden’s 2024 Indy 500-winning car – now on display at the newly renovated Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum – was found to also be carrying the illegally modified spec part.

BAD DAYS FOR PENSKE

The next day, IndyCar escalated the penalties, moving Newgarden and Power to the back of the grid. Then Roger Penske announced the team was “parting ways” with three key managers, including Tim Cindric, Penske’s right-hand man since late 1999. The moves were regarded as necessary for two reasons. This was the second IndyCar cheating scandal the extremely image-conscious Penske has been caught in over the past 14 months (though not nearly as egregious as Newgarden’s illegal use of push-to-pass found at St Petersburg in March 2024). But it was mainly

optics: Penske owns and operates not only his racing team, but the IndyCar Series as a whole and the IMS. He was avoiding a potential uproar from fans and competitors about preferential treatment and multiple conflicts of interest.

Penske’s race day was nearly as bad. McLaughlin crashed on the pace lap while warming his tyres on an unseasonably cool day. “By far, the worst moment of my life,” stated McLaughlin. “I know it’s probably dramatic and whatever, but I put so much into this race. Everyone does, and I didn’t even get to see the green flag.” Newgarden retired with a faulty fuel pump two-thirds of the way into the race, while Power scraped home a lap down

in 19th place on the road, prior to the penalties of others.

Generally speaking, it was a dull and processional race. This was the first Indy 500 for IndyCar’s new-in-mid-2024 hybrid energy recovery system, and the 60kg hardware adversely affected the handling of an already tail-heavy Dallara chassis. The pole speed was down by 1.5mph, and the small margin for error in unbalanced cars made it extremely difficult to pass, especially for drivers third or further back in a line.

CAUGHT OUT BY THE COLD

Fuel saving strategies also played a part, as 14 of the 33 drivers led at one time or another. Front row starter Sato led the most laps with 51, followed by 2014 winner Ryan Hunter-Reay’s 48. But neither figured in the final reckoning. Sato, trying for a third Indy crown, was 11th at the flag, which became ninth.

The race was delayed by 43 minutes by light rain, and the cold conditions (17C) likely contributed to a spate of brake problems such as the one that led to Schwartzman’s ill-fated pitstop and Rinus VeeKay’s pitlane crash. The left-rear corner of Dixon’s car caught fire on the warm-up laps, and the New Zealander eventually lost three laps when the Ganassi team changed the left-rear caliper about a quarter of the way into the race. Dixon, the 2008 Indy winner still in search of an elusive second, was >>



**McLaughlin was
inconsolable after
pace lap crash**

GALSTAD/GETTY IMAGES

XXX
XXX

eventually classified 20th.

Malukas therefore wound up tops among the rest in the best finish of 2025 for AJ Foyt Racing, which now operates as a Penske satellite team. Malukas, a 23-year-old American, is being groomed for a future Penske seat, presumably to replace Power. The veteran Australian's contract expires at the end of this season.

"We turned it up with about 15 laps to go and I was hanging on for life, trying to get something out of it," Malukas related. "Those two lapped cars kind of ruined the fun for us and chose this winner. That's just kind of how this track goes."

O'Ward had the opportunity to complete a memorable double for McLaren following Lando Norris's victory in the Monaco Grand Prix. But the Mexican turned in a strangely subdued performance in the race. Despite starting from the favorable outside of the front row, he led for just two laps and never looked like being a factor, though inherited third.

"We've seemed to have had every single result in the top five over the past five years except for the most important one," O'Ward lamented. "Congratulations to Alex; I've got to get on whatever he's eating, because he's on a run like I've never seen before, one I don't think the series has seen in 50 years or more."

A LACK OF STORYLINES

McLaughlin's pace-lap crash, which delayed the start even further, was a harbinger for a strangely flat race that produced few memorable storylines other than Palou's almost inevitable victory and Ericsson's heartbreaking latest close call.

Dixon, whose lack of multiple Indianapolis wins is the only blot on a historically successful copybook, was an also-ran by half-distance. Newgarden's retirement took away the potential unprecedented-three-Indy-wins-in-a-row angle; Helio Castroneves's quest for an equally historic fifth victory was never on the cards, the 50-year-old Brazilian coming home 10th.

NASCAR star Kyle Larson had a 40-minute 'fudge factor' to facilitate his ability to compete in both the Indy 500 and the Cup Series Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway later the same day. The 43-minute rain delay could have had a critical impact, but Larson crashed on a lap 92 restart, eliminating any drama whether he would make it back to his 'day job' on time. Another crash put Larson out of contention at Charlotte in what will likely be his last attempt at the Indy/Charlotte 'Double'.

JOHN OREOVICZ



GALSTAD/GETTY IMAGES



INDYCAR SERIES ROUND 6/16 RESULTS

INDIANAPOLIS (USA)
 26.05.25 / 200 LAPS


POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME	GRID
1	Alex Palou	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	2h57m38.2965s	6
2	David Malukas	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1.1426s	7
3	Pato O'Ward	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	+2.1327s	3
4	Felix Rosenqvist	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+2.9464s	5
5	Santino Ferrucci	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+4.9902s	15
6	Christian Rasmussen	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+6.0274s	18
7	Christian Lundgaard	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	+9.2592s	8
8	Conor Daly	Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+13.3125s	11
9	Takuma Sato	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+16.9157s	2
10	Helio Castroneves	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+59.6118s	22
11	Devlin DeFrancesco	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+1m02.1039s	16
12	Louis Foster	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+1m03.0004s	20
13	Nolan Siegel	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	199 laps-accident	24
14	Colton Herta	Andretti Global / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap	27
15	Ed Carpenter	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap	14
16	Will Power	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap	33
17	Graham Rahal	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap	28
18	Marcus Armstrong	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	-2 laps	30
19	Jack Harvey	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing / Cusick Motorsports / Dallara-Chevrolet	-2 laps	26
20	Scott Dixon	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	-3 laps	4
21	Ryan Hunter-Reay	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing / Cusick Motorsports / Dallara-Chevrolet	171 laps-fuel lines	25
22	Josef Newgarden	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	135 laps-fuel pressure	32
23	Sting Ray Robb	Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	91 laps-accident	17
24	Kyle Larson	Arrow McLaren / Rick Hendrick / Dallara-Chevrolet	91 laps-accident	19
25	Kyffin Simpson	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	91 laps-accident	13
26	Robert Shwartzman	Prema Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	87 laps-accident	1
27	Rinus VeeKay	Dale Coyne Racing / Dallara-Honda	81 laps-accident	31
28	Alexander Rossi	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	73 laps-gearbox/fire	12
29	Marco Andretti	Andretti Global / Dallara-Honda	4 laps-accident	29
30	Scott McLaughlin	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	0 laps-accident	10
31	Marcus Ericsson	Andretti Global / Dallara-Honda	+0.6822s	9
32	Kyle Kirkwood	Andretti Global / Dallara-Honda	+3.9822s	23
33	Callum Ilott	Prema Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+21.3918s	21

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 168.883mph

FASTEST LAP **Castroneves** 39.7916s, 226.178mph.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Palou 306; 2 O'Ward 194; 3 Lundgaard 181; 4 Rosenqvist 165; 5 Kirkwood 156; 6 Dixon 153; 7 McLaughlin 145; 8 Power 142; 9 Herta 120; 10 Malukas 110.

Ericsson crossed the line
second – then penalty
dropped him to 31st

Thrills may have been lacking,
but crushingly competent
Palou wasn't complaining



Rowland won in Tokyo
and Monaco (below)

GALLOWAY/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA E

ROWLAND'S ELECTRIC BLITZ

Oliver Rowland said *sayonara* to Japan with almost double the points tally of his nearest rival in the Formula E title fight after drivers old and new starred across double-headers in Tokyo and Monaco in the past month.

Rain lashing the Tokyo track on Saturday led to qualifying being cancelled, but the race went ahead and was won by Maserati driver Stoffel Vandoorne; his first since Monaco 2022. It was an inspired or lucky – depending which way you look at it – win for the Belgian, who'd run hard in the early laps to go first for a Pit Boost, leaving him to charge for glory after a red flag had followed. Sunday's race was far more straightforward, with Nissan star Rowland fastest all through the day.

Rowland didn't score points in the Sao Paulo opener and was 10th in Homestead, but other than that it had been second or higher for the 32-year-old Yorkshireman as we went to press before the Shanghai event, with two wins and two seconds across the Monaco and Tokyo rounds.

Nearest rival Pascal Wehrlein could only look on one win this season, in Miami, but the Porsche

star was runner-up in the Sunday Tokyo race after finishing 13th on the Saturday. The German has a tough task ahead of him if he's to catch Rowland, and the 30-year-old has the slight interlude of taking part in his first Le Mans 24 Hours between the Shanghai and Jakarta events.

Crucially, when Rowland hasn't won it's been an interesting mix of winners, with Sebastien Buemi taking the second win of the weekend in Monaco for the Jaguar-powered Envision – his first FE victory for six years.

If the oldies have taken the recent non-Rowland victories, then it's a young rookie who has been showing speed and maturity beyond his years, with Taylor Barnard excelling for McLaren. The Briton was on the podium in the first Tokyo race and, were it not for contact from behind, was in contention for a

podium for the second too.

That gave Barnard fourth in the standings for a team with an uncertain future after McLaren confirmed it would depart Formula E at the season's end to redirect its focus on the World Endurance Championship; with Jaguar team principal James Barclay confirming he will leap from the Big Cat to join.

Jaguar, the reigning teams' champion, continued to disappoint, with no one able to pinpoint where it has all gone so wrong. At least Nick Cassidy picked up a third in Monaco.

Series 'bad-boy' Dan Ticktum came good with his first Formula E podium in the second Tokyo race with a mature drive following an exceptional qualifying effort to assist Porsche-powered Cupra Kiro in their aspirations to secure 100 points this season.

ANDY STOBART



FERRARO/GETTY IMAGES



FRECA

MIXED FOR SLATER

Silverstone Autosport BRDC Award finalist Freddie Slater took his maiden Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine victory at Spa, but two non-finishes over the first two rounds mean he is down in fourth in the points.

Prema Racing-run Slater won his battle in race one with Enzo Deligny, the French R-ace GP charge taking the sequel with Slater forced out in an early collision. At the Misano opener, Slater was second to Evan Giltaire in race two, after Matteo De Palo (Trident) had taken first blood.



JEP

F4 AT BRITISH GP

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers says the non-championship British F4 double-header added to the British Grand Prix bill will be "a festival of international F4".

Although the races are open only to teams from the MSUK-promoted British series, there is high interest from drivers based overseas and teams could run up to six cars each for a grid of 30-36.

➔ P77 GUEST COLUMN



SUTTON/FORMULA1/GETTY IMAGES

FORMULA 2

IT'S DUNNE VS BROWNING

The Formula 2 title race is brewing up nicely. McLaren junior Alex Dunne, who is putting in by far the most concerted attack on an FIA F2 crown by an Irishman since Derek Daly in 1979, moved to the top at Imola. And then Williams protege Luke Browning leapfrogged him to strike a blow for Cheshire on a chaotic weekend in Monaco.

The standout performance over the May rounds was arguably Dunne's at Imola. The Rodin Motorsport driver qualified fifth and ran fourth early in the race, then leapfrogged Leonardo Farnaroli in the pits as the leading contenders exchanged their supersoft tyres for softs. Browning pitted a lap later and this gave the Hitech GP ace the overcut on team-mate Dino Beganovic, the Ferrari-backed Bosno-Swede who had led up until the pitstops.

With Browning still on cold tyres, Beganovic attempted to go around the outside at Tosa but was ushered wide onto the grass. That lifted Dunne to a

net second, and he used DRS to claim the net lead from Browning at Tamburello.

Amid-race safety car came too early for those running long on the soft tyres to switch to supersoft, and Dunne was fifth on the road at the restart. But he showed fantastic racecraft to pick them off. By the time Browning had moved up to second on the road, Dunne was five seconds in front. Beganovic was third while Arvid Lindblad, the Red Bull Junior in the mix throughout in his Campos Racing car, claimed fourth.

"Both times I've won, Luke has been right there next to me," said Dunne after his second feature race win of the season. "He seems quite close to me at the minute."

The preceding day's sprint race resulted in a win for DAMS-run Texan Aston Martin junior Jak Crawford from Lindblad and Browning, with Dunne fifth behind Victor Martins (ART Grand Prix).

But Dunne was in trouble in Monaco. After qualifying on pole, he was beaten away by



SBLOXHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Martins. The Frenchman hadn't quite cleared Dunne by Ste Devote and turned in, the contact sending them into the wall and resulting in a mighty pile-up. Dunne was given a 10-place grid drop for the next round at Barcelona.

Crawford lucked in when the safety car was called during the restart after the top three had passed the pitlane entry. He dived in and was declared the winner of a half-points race that was red-flagged again. The unfortunate Farnaroli, who had led nearly all the way, was classified second with Browning fourth.

Browning had completed the podium in the sprint race behind Kush Maini and Gabriele Mini when third-place finisher Lindblad was given a 10s penalty for punting Crawford wide at Mirabeau on the opening lap.

RACE WINNERS 3 May - 25 May

INDYCAR

Barber Motorsports Park 4 May

- 1 **Alex Palou** (Chip Ganassi Racing)
- 2 **Christian Lundgaard** (Arrow McLaren)
- 3 **Scott McLaughlin** (Team Penske)

Indianapolis 10 May

- 1 **Alex Palou** (Chip Ganassi Racing)
- 2 **Pato O'Ward** (Arrow McLaren)
- 3 **Will Power** (Team Penske)

POINTS See page 71.

FORMULA E

Monte Carlo 3-4 May

Race 1

- 1 **Oliver Rowland** (Nissan)
- 2 **Nyck de Vries** (Mahindra)
- 3 **Jake Dennis** (Andretti Porsche)

Race 2

- 1 **Sebastien Buemi** (Envision Jaguar)
- 2 **Oliver Rowland** (Nissan)
- 3 **Nick Cassidy** (Jaguar)

Tokyo 17-18 May

Race 1

- 1 **Stoffel Vandoorne** (Maserati, below)
- 2 **Oliver Rowland** (Nissan)
- 3 **Taylor Barnard** (McLaren Nissan)

Race 2

- 1 **Oliver Rowland** (Nissan)
- 2 **Pascal Wehrlein** (Porsche)
- 3 **Dan Ticktum** (Cupra Kiro Porsche)

POINTS 1 Rowland 161; 2 Wehrlein 84; 3 Antonio Felix da Costa 73.

FORMULA 2

Imola 17-18 May

Race 1 **Jak Crawford** (DAMS)

Race 2 **Alex Dunne** (Rodin Motorsport)

Monte Carlo 24-25 May

Race 1 **Kush Maini** (DAMS)

Race 2 **Jak Crawford** (DAMS)

POINTS 1 **Luke Browning** 70; 2 Dunne 67; 3 Leonardo Farnaroli 64.



GALLOWAY/GETTY IMAGES



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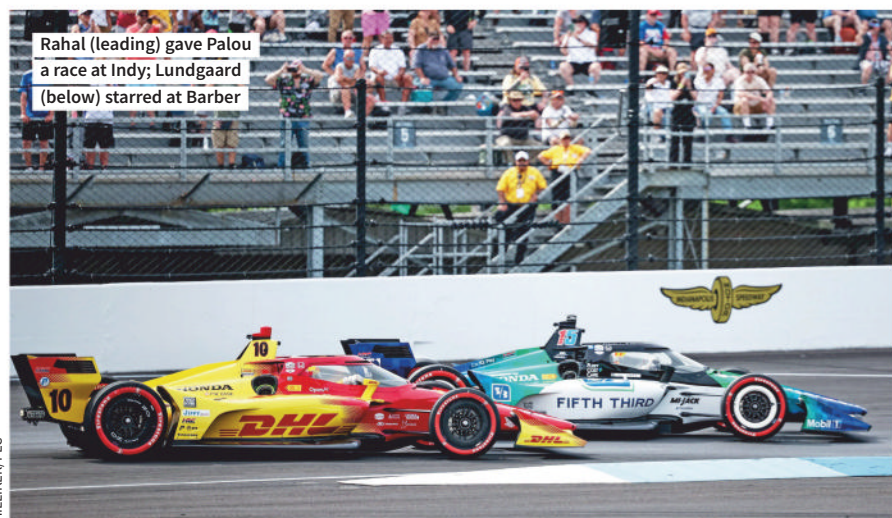


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Rahal (leading) gave Palou a race at Indy; Lundgaard (below) starred at Barber

HILLIKER/PEC

INDYCAR

PALOU CONTINUES HIS UNSTOPPABLE RUN WITH MONTH OF MAY CLEAN SWEEP

Time was then the 'Month of May' in IndyCar parlance meant a whole four weeks at the 2.5-mile Indianapolis Motor Speedway leading up to the Memorial Day weekend. These days the month of May kicks off with two preceding IndyCar rounds, one at IMS itself, albeit on a derivative of the old F1 layout, the other in the rolling Alabama countryside of Barber Motorsports Park.

But, for all the intervening rigmarole of 500 qualifying, Bump Day, illegal Penske cars in qualifying, illegal other cars in the race, there was one constant throughout May 2025: Alex Palou winning races. At Barber, he made it three wins out of four for the season; at Indy GP it became

four out of five; and then of course five out of six at the 500 itself (see p66).

The mild-mannered Catalan was utterly dominant in Alabama. His Honda-engined Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara qualified on the pole, and Palou led all but a few laps around the pitstops. Thankfully there was action behind, and much of it seemed to come courtesy of Christian Lundgaard, who has become a breakout IndyCar star since joining the Arrow McLaren line-up for 2025.

Lundgaard was seventh on the grid, sandwiched by teammates Nolan Siegel and Pato O'Ward, but good strategy and some spectacular racecraft pushed him up the order. His move on Scott McLaughlin

for what would become second place was a beauty. The Kiwi was on his out-lap after a pitstop when Lundgaard, who had pitted three laps earlier and had his tyres up to temperature, sent it around the outside of the Team Penske car at the long Turn 14 in an audacious pass. No wonder the Dane is becoming known as Christian 'Lunge-gaard'.

McLaughlin just held on for third from a charging Rinus VeeKay (Dale Coyne Racing), with Penske veteran Will Power fifth.

Palou faced a challenge from an unexpected quarter on the Indy road course: Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing pair Graham Rahal and British rookie Louis Foster, second and third on the grid.

Reigning Indy NXT champion Foster finished 11th, but Rahal used fresh red (softer tyres) to lead Palou, and stayed ahead until 28 laps from home. After a late caution (the first since round one), O'Ward came through to second from Power and McLaughlin, with Rahal sixth.

TRAVIS DAYE



SKIBINSKI/PEC

RACE WINNERS 3 May - 25 May

FORMULA 3

Imola 17-18 May

- Race 1** **Tim Tramnitz**
(MP Motorsport)
- Race 2** **Santiago Ramos**
(Van Amersfoort Racing)

Monte Carlo 24-25 May

- Race 1** **Martinius Stenshorne**
(Hitech GP)
- Race 2** **Nikola Tsolov**
(Campos Racing)

POINTS 1 Rafael Camara 77;
2 Tramnitz 64; 3 Tsolov 61.

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

Misano 3-4 May

- Race 1** **Matteo De Palo**
(Trident)
- Race 2** **Evan Giltaire**
(ART Grand Prix)

Spa 17-18 May

- Race 1** **Freddie Slater**
(Prema Racing)
- Race 2** **Enzo Deligny**
(R-ace GP)

POINTS 1 De Palo 66; 2 Giltaire 55;
3 Deligny 53.

SUPER FORMULA

Autopolis 18 May

Sho Tsuboi (TOM'S)

POINTS 1 Tadasuke Makino 65;
2 Kakunoshin Ohta 61; 3 Tsuboi 51.

INDY NXT

Barber Motorsports Park 4 May
Dennis Hauger (Andretti Global)

Indianapolis 9-10 May

- Race 1** **Lochie Hughes**
(Andretti Global)
- Race 2** **Dennis Hauger**

POINTS 1 Hauger 187; 2 Hughes 172;
3 Myles Rowe 134.

F1 ACADEMY

Miami 3-4 May

- Race 1** **Doriane Pin**
(Prema Racing)
- Race 2** **Cancelled**

POINTS 1 Maya Weug 64; 2 Pin 63;
3 Chloe Chambers 55.

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INSIDER

Karun Chandhok can't wait to see the single-seater ladder at Silverstone

The British Grand Prix weekend is going to be a special one for the world of single-seater racing. In an unprecedented moment, the entire ladder of Formula 1, F2, F3 and F4 will all run at the same event.

Most people reading this will know of me as an ex-Formula 1 driver or a television commentator and analyst from Sky Sports F1. Two other hats I currently wear are as a director of both the British Racing Drivers' Club, which owns Silverstone, and Motorsport UK, the governing body for the sport in the UK, and which is also the promoter of the British F4 Championship. So, having F4 running at the grand prix at Silverstone is particularly special for me.

As a brief history lesson, the British F4 Championship was struggling back in 2021, with grids that had bottomed out at 11 in 2020 and only recovered into the mid-teens. That was when I first got involved with Motorsport UK and, as a governing body, we had a philosophical decision to make around "do we let British F4 die or try and make it work ourselves?"

Since its creation over a decade ago, F4 has globally become the premier entry point for kids graduating from karting so, if the UK wanted to be relevant in the global single-seater ladder, we had to make it work.

By becoming the promoters ourselves, the first thing we did was to try and listen to the customers by inviting all of the teams to the HQ in Bicester to ask what they felt was needed to get the interest back up.

Alignment with the European chassis, engine and tyres was the answer – we had a Mygale chassis, Ford engine and Hankook tyres, and now had to try to satisfy the customers by getting deals done for a Tatuus chassis, Abarth engines and Pirelli tyres!

It was no easy task, but the team led by Colin Clark and Eve-Lake Grange did a fantastic job to get the deals done

and, over the past three years, the grids have grown to regularly over 20 cars, which is a good number for the British circuits.

The championship has run alongside the British Touring Cars on the TOCA package for the most part and I really do believe, from personal experience, that racing at the narrower British circuits such as Brands Hatch and Oulton Park are a great challenge for the drivers to develop their skills.

But one of the key targets that we were very keen to achieve since 2022 was adding some grand prix tracks to the calendar, something TOCA doesn't do, so F4 now goes to the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit and Zandvoort away from the BTCC weekends.

I remember from my British F3 days that we would have a non-championship round over the grand prix weekend, which gave all the drivers a special feeling. We used to get drivers from teams such as ASM, Prema and Signature who raced in the European F3 championships coming over to do it as a one-off, which added another interesting element to see how the various championships compared.

Getting a slot on a GP weekend is a massive challenge these days and it's taken a few years, but I'm delighted that we've been able to work with the team at Formula 1 to find a slot for two races this year. There should be an influx of drivers who aren't regulars in the British F4 Championship coming to take part, including I hope some from F1 Academy who aren't racing that weekend, but their cars are basically the same, so it will be good experience for them to compete against a bigger grid in a familiar car.

Does getting a good result on a grand prix weekend matter? I remember when I first went to do GP2 (now rebranded Formula 2 of course), I thought it was just

"A good result could be an invaluable turning point in the careers of any of the drivers"

a marketing line that the teams were using to hook drivers in. When I got to the first weekend in Bahrain in 2007, I realised that I was completely wrong and actually a lot of people in the F1 paddock from team bosses, the decision makers of the young driver programmes and key engineers in the teams all keep an eye on the support races, so a good result over this weekend at Silverstone could be an invaluable turning point in the careers of any of the young drivers taking part.

Two of the top F1 World Championship contenders, Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri, have come through British F4, with recent graduates including top talents such as Luke Browning, Alex Dunne and Deagen Fairclough, and I'm excited to see how the current crop gets on. 🍀



Sparks but no luck for Lambo at Brands

International sportscar racing returned to British shores with the opening weekend of the GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup at Brands Hatch at the start of May. This was the 11th running of the event at the Kentish venue, but there was no luck for the Grasser Racing Team

and Lamborghini, winners of the inaugural fixture back in 2014. Both its Huracán GT3 EVO2s were thrown to the back of the grid for a Balance of Performance infringement. Despite the use of every inch of road, the drivers of the #19 Silver Cup entry, Baptiste Moulin and Ivan

Ekelchik, failed to make an impression in either of the two one-hour races. They went home with a 29th-place finish and a DNF. The races were won by the AF Corse Ferrari of Alessio Rovera/Vincent Abril and Winward Mercedes of Lucas Auer/Maro Engel.



Photographer SRO/JEP

Where Brands Hatch, Kent, UK

When Sunday 4 May 2025

Details Nikon Z8,
Nikkor Z 180-600mm lens,
1/1250th @ F6.0



JEP/GETTY IMAGES

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

FERRARI AGAIN BUT THE FIELD CLOSES

Ferrari made it three out of three in this year's World Endurance Championship at Spa. The 499P Le Mans Hypercar was on top again. Just. This was a race that Alpine or BMW could potentially have won. And to complete the hat-trick with a 1-2 result, the Italian manufacturer had to pull a ploy in the pitlane that didn't impress race control.

The Ferrari was once again the fastest car, though the advantage it enjoyed on race pace around the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps in May was diminished from the previous month's Imola round, just as it had been between Qatar in February and its home race. Alpine wasn't far

behind and neither was BMW. Their respective A424 and M Hybrid V8 LMDh contenders were able to race – and race hard – with the 499Ps.

James Calado, Antonio Giovinazzi and Alessandro Pier Guidi took the laurels by a shade over four seconds from the sister car driven by Nicklas Nielsen, Miguel Molina and Antonio Fuoco. Best of the rest was the Alpine shared by Frederic Makowiecki, Jules Gounon and Mick Schumacher, just nine tenths further down.

It was close enough to assume that had not Ferrari and the factory AF Corse team sailed close to the wind in the pitlane early in hour four, it would not have taken a third victory of the

season. Molina in the #50 Ferrari was running just ahead of Giovinazzi in #51 when the race's second safety car was called. There was no Virtual Safety Car this time, which meant the pits were closed for two laps. That sparked a rush towards them on their opening, but Ferrari had a problem.

Strategically it needed to pit both cars at the same time, but #51's pit stall was nearest pit-out. There would have been all kinds of kerfuffle outside the Ferrari box had they arrived in the order in which they were running. One car would have needed to be pulled back into position, the other potentially delayed leaving the pits. "It would have been a disaster," said Giuliano Salvi, the test and race team manager.

Ferrari couldn't swap positions on the track – no overtaking behind the safety car, of course – so it did it in the pitlane. Molina jinked out of the fast lane and into what is known as the blend lane to allow Giovinazzi past and then jinked back. Sneaky and potentially dangerous, yes, but illegal, no. Nowhere in the sporting rules does it say that overtaking is not allowed in the pitlane.

Ferrari was issued with a reprimand, the stewards describing its actions as a "misuse of the pitlane". What was a largely meaningless sanction was made under a catch-all clause in the rules titled "unsporting conduct".

There was a fear on the Ferrari pitwall that the



JEP/GETTY IMAGES



#50 would get a penalty. It was ready to receive a plus-five-seconds before the end of the race, which is why it immediately allowed Fuoco past Pier Guidi, who had taken over their respective mounts, to try to build up a buffer.

The penalty never came, but #51 triumphed when the two Ferraris diverged on fuel strategy in the closing stages. The third safety car was called with just over two hours to go, this one starting with a VSC that allowed everyone to pit straight away. The race went green with an hour and 51 minutes left, which meant the Hypercars were not going to make it to the end on just one more pitstop. Not without some extreme fuel saving.

When the two red cars made their final full stops with more or less an hour to go, Pier Guidi set out to build an advantage that would allow him to get in and out of the pits and still win the race. Nielsen, who had taken over from Fuoco, set out to try to eke out his energy allocation to go to the end without stopping again.

It looked like a classic split strategy, but Salvi revealed post-race that the two car crews had independently made their decisions. Nielsen was put back in the cockpit of the car in which he'd taken the start because he is the master of fuel-save. Ferrari's boffins weren't sure which was going to be the fastest strategy, but it was apparent that the one chosen by #51 was the

quickest way. Pier Guidi built up an advantage of 39s, a shade more than the 35 he needed to duck in and out for his splash. Nielsen, meanwhile, came under attack from Schumacher, two quick-fire Full Course Yellows in the final hour undoubtedly helping him hang onto second.

Schumacher was running fourth when he pitted in the penultimate hour with a slow right-rear puncture. It wasn't the disaster for Alpine that it might have looked. The Signatech Alpine team simply recalculated its energy strategy, ending up not too far from the one that yielded it a podium at Imola. It was another impressive result: a second podium on the trot and a third in five races. Makowiecki reckoned second was as good as it was going to get, but Ferrari insisted that the French manufacturer had the pace to win.

BMW, like Alpine, wasn't convinced it could have won, but a podium was possible, reckoned Robin Frijns, who led the Munich marque's charge in the car he shared with Rene Rast and was running between the Ferraris when he made his final full pitstop. A braking problem resulted in the car's retirement in the final hour.

Spa proved that the field is edging closer to Ferrari. And that the Italian manufacturer is now a finely honed race team ready and willing to exploit the rules to the nth degree.

GARY WATKINS

RESULTS ROUND 3/8

LM HYPERCAR/OVERALL

- Alessandro Pier Guidi/James Calado/
Antonio Giovinazzi**
Ferrari 499P
(Ferrari AF Corse)
150 laps in 6h01m07.299s
Grid 3rd (2m00.201s)
- Antonio Fuoco/Miguel Molina/
Nicklas Nielsen**
Ferrari 499P
(Ferrari AF Corse)
+4.229s
Grid 1st (1m59.617s)
- Jules Gounon/Frederic Makowiecki/
Mick Schumacher**
Alpine A424
(Alpine Endurance Team)
+5.148s
Grid 6th (2m00.368s)
- Sebastien Buemi/Brendon Hartley/
Ryo Hirakawa**
Toyota GR010 HYBRID
(TGR)
+32.760s
Grid 15th (2m01.908s)
- Alex Lynn/Norman Nato/Will Stevens**
Cadillac V-Series.R
(Jota)
+35.966s
Grid 5th (2m00.246s)

LMGT3

- Francois Heriau/Simon Mann/
Alessio Rovera**
Ferrari 296 GT3
(AF Corse)
137 laps in 6h02m34.611s
Grid 7th (2m18.456s)
- Stefano Gattuso/Giammarco
Levorato/Dennis Olsen**
Ford Mustang GT3
(Proton Competition)
+40.230s
Grid 4th (2m18.229s)
- Thomas Flohr/Francesco Castellacci/
Davide Rigon**
Ferrari 296 GT3
(AF Corse)
+42.104s
Grid 5th (2m18.288s)

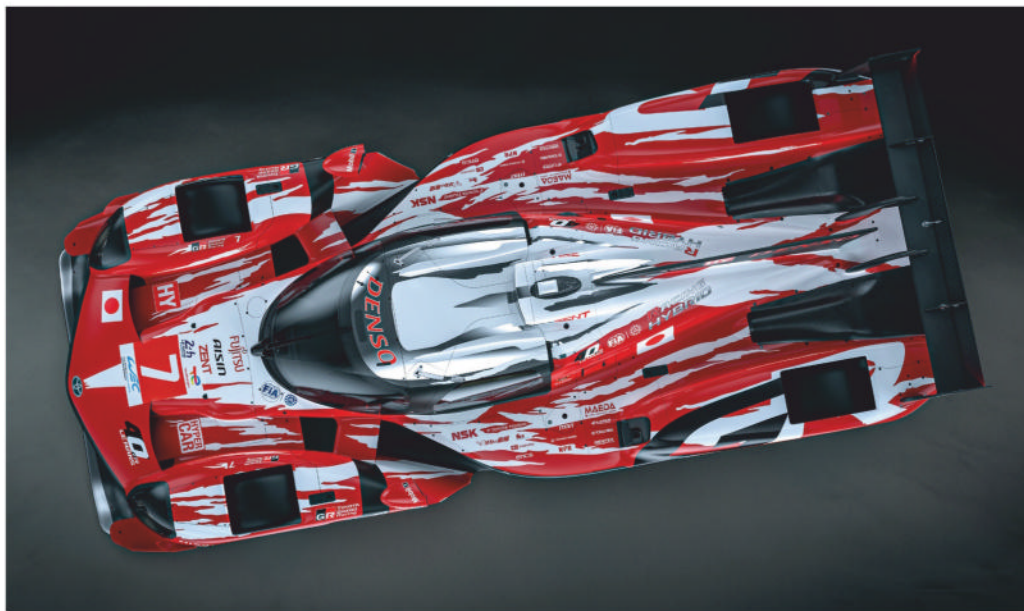
POLE Fuoco 1m59.617s (130.978mph)

FASTEST LAP

Pier Guidi 2m03.799s (126.554mph)

POINTS 1 Pier Guidi/Giovinazzi/Calado 75; 2 Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen 57; 3 Robert Kubica/Yifei Ye/Phil Hanson 39.





RETRO TOYOTA AT LE MANS

Toyota is paying homage to its GT-One contender of 1998-99 at the Le Mans 24 Hours in celebration of the 40th anniversary of its first campaign at the French enduro. The #7 GR010 HYBRID Le Mans Hypercar driven by Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Nyck de Vries will run a copycat livery from the GT1 contender's maiden assault on the race. Toyota was represented at Le Mans in 1985 by a pair of Dome-built Group C chassis, one run by the Japanese constructor and one by the TOM'S team, which had combined to mastermind the factory-supported programme.

WEC

PEUGEOT SET FOR HYPERCAR LONG-TERM EXTENSION

Peugeot appears ready to extend its commitment to the World Endurance Championship. The Stellantis marque's top brass has suggested that it is in the series for the long haul and has dropped heavy hints that it could develop a new car to replace the existing version of the 9X8 Le Mans Hypercar.

New Peugeot CEO Alain Favey insisted that Peugeot was in the WEC's Hypercar class "for the long term". Meanwhile, Jean-Marc Finot, motorsport boss of the Stellantis group, stated that "it is very likely that we will keep on [in the series]".

Favey wouldn't elaborate on what long term means. "We are here to demonstrate the strength of the brand over a long period," he said. "We are looking for step by step improvement that will lead to success. Our wish is to stay in the championship until we reach a performance that is one that we think conforms with our expectations."

Peugeot is committed to the WEC



JEP/GETTY IMAGES

through to the end of 2026, three years before the scheduled finish of the current LMH and LMDh rulesets. They were extended by two seasons last year and appear set for a further prolongation through to 2032, a move that is likely to be announced during the week of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

LMH allows a manufacturer to homologate two new cars during the lifespan of the regulations. Finot pointed out that Peugeot, which announced its WEC entry in late

2019, designed the 9X8 during a period when the rules were changing rapidly after the announcement of the LMDh category as a second route into Hypercar. He suggested that even with the '2024' version of the car introduced last year, it was still compromised.

"For a newcomer entering in 2026 or 2027, it is easier to design a car with frozen regulations than with the regulations we had to adapt around," Finot explained. "It would make sense that since

we entered the championship in the beginning [in year two of the Hypercar rules in 2022], if there is an extension it would be fair to have the possibility to adapt the car."

Peugeot Sport technical director Olivier Jansonnie refused to be drawn on plans for the future. "We don't want to discuss our technical strategy," he said. "It depends pretty much on the regulations, which are going to move at some point."

GARY WATKINS

LOPEZ BACK AGAIN AS 'SUPERSUB'

Jose Maria Lopez is on standby for the Le Mans 24 Hours as Toyota's reserve driver. The role he played last June, when he replaced Mike Conway in the #7 entry, has been formalised for this year.

Lopez was described as the "best choice for the role" by David Floury, technical director at Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe, which against usual practice had not named a test and reserve driver for 2025.

Jack Hawksworth is



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reprising the substitute role he fulfilled at Le Mans last year when he took Lopez's place at the Auto Sport Promotion Lexus LMGT3 team. This

time he has been brought in to replace the injured Ben Barnicoat in the French squad's #78 entry.

GARY WATKINS



PORSCHE

PORSCHE MAKES IT A 2-1 THIS TIME

So, you might ask, what's new in the IMSA SportsCar Championship? Not much, it would appear. The first 'regular distance' event of 2025, at two hours and 40 minutes, began and ended in precisely the same way as the previous three. Dries Vanthoor once again started his BMW M Hybrid V8 from pole at Laguna Seca and, when the chequered flag fell, the pair of Porsche Penske Motorsport 963s emerged clearly ahead of the field, albeit this time with Matt Campbell and Mathieu Jaminet beating Felipe Nasr and Nick Tandy.

But as is usually the case in IMSA competition, that doesn't tell the full story.

For starters, the rulemakers attempted to spice things up a little. The 963s' minimum weight remained unchanged at 1049kg, but maximum power was trimmed from 496kW to 485 and allowable stint energy from 899MJ to 882. The BMW, by contrast, added a little weight (1030kg to 1036) while increasing power from 512 to 520kW and stint energy from 899 to 905MJ.

What difference did that make? Good question. Vanthoor's pole was by a scant 0.005s over Campbell and less than 0.1s ahead of Nasr. The second BMW, in Shaun van der Linde's hands, was just over 0.2s off his team-mate's best, albeit sixth on the grid behind Ricky Taylor's Cadillac and Tom Blomqvist's Acura.

On race day, the two

Porsches and Vanthoor were in a league of their own. Strategic decisions and excellent energy conservation aided Campbell/Jaminet. Tandy was never far behind in the all-green encounter. Not so the BMW, until Vanthoor replaced team-mate Philipp Eng and charged hard to ensure a three-horse race to the finish.

Jaminet just about held on for the win, expertly negotiating traffic, especially in the closing few corners. Vanthoor briefly nosed alongside Tandy – who was already alongside a lapped Lamborghini GT car – heading into Turn 11 for the final time, only to spear off into the dirt.

The BMW recovered to take a distant third, but perhaps next time will be different.

JEREMY SHAW

RACE WINNERS 3 May - 25 May

IMSA SPORTSCAR

Laguna Seca 11 May

- 1 **Mathieu Jaminet/Matt Campbell**
(Porsche Penske M'sport Porsche 963)
- 2 **Nick Tandy/Felipe Nasr**
(Porsche Penske M'sport Porsche 963)
- 3 **Philipp Eng/Dries Vanthoor**
(RLL BMW M Hybrid V8)

POINTS 1 Nasr/Tandy 1490;
2 Jaminet/Campbell 1399;
3 Vanthoor/Eng 1210.

GTWC EUROPE SPRINT CUP

Brands Hatch 4 May

Race 1

Alessio Rovera/Vincent Abril
(AF Corse Ferrari 296 GT3)

Race 2

Lucas Auer/Maro Engel
(Winward Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo)

Zandvoort 17-18 May

Race 1

Sven Muller/Patric Niederhauser
(Rutronik Racing Porsche 911 GT3-R)

Race 2

Kelvin van der Linde/Charles Weerts
(Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 Evo)

POINTS 1 van der Linde/Weerts 37.5; 2 Niederhauser/Muller 33;
3 Auer/Engel 32.5.

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

Paul Ricard 4 May

Daniel Juncadella/Jamie Chadwick/Mathys Jaubert
(IDEC Sport ORECA 07)

POINTS 1 Juncadella/Chadwick/Jaubert 50; 2 Pietro Fittipaldi/Ryan Cullen/Vlad Lomko 27; 3 Charles Milesi/Esteban Masson/Oliver Gray 26.

DTM

Lausitzring 24-25 May

Race 1 Lucas Auer

(Landgraf Mercedes)

Race 2 Jack Aitken

(Emil Frey Racing Ferrari)

POINTS 1 Auer 69; 2 Jules Gounon 63; 3 Jordan Pepper 55.

SUPER GT

Fuji 4 May

Hiroaki Ishiura/Toshiki Oyu
(Cerumo Toyota GR Supra)

POINTS 1 Sho Tsuboi/Kenta Yamashita 35; 2 Ishiura/Oyu 21;
3 Kazuya Oshima/Nirei Fukuzumi 21.



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And the sponsorships reflect RDA's rich expertise in the sector. Its expert team of PhDs, chartered accountants and industry veterans combines deep technical, financial and compliance knowledge to support clients throughout the R&D process.

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Intangibles are the companies' main business assets, accounting for 70% of the overall balance-sheet value in the UK. Transitioning away from traditional, physical assets in the knowledge-based economy means understanding and leveraging IP becomes less of a luxury and more of a necessity.

"Intellectual-property protection is an area that many businesses overlook, but it is essential in the whole knowledge economy"

"Intellectual-property protection is an area that many businesses overlook, but it is essential in the whole knowledge economy – and that applies particularly in an arms race for innovation like motorsport," says RDA's founder and managing director, Kevin Auchoybur.

"That is why we have such a strong focus in the sector, supporting several race teams to direct their R&D strategies. There is a wealth of protectable IP that we see across motorsport and we look forward to helping more teams and suppliers make the most of what they have."

IP support provided by RDA includes the identification and cataloguing of all IP, determining appropriate IP rights and forecasting costs, including a trade-secrets policy.

From there, the RDA team can assess the monetary value of a company's IP assets for purposes such as fundraising, M&A, licensing, tax planning and litigation.

RDA also provides guidance through patent applications, identifying technologies for patentability and Patent Box tax relief.



RDA
DEVELOP TOGETHER





INSIDER

*It's a different kind of unpredictable
Le Mans, says Gary Watkins*

Who's going to win the Le Mans 24 Hours? It's a question I'm asked a lot at this time of year. I get it from colleagues, friends and, on one occasion, a stranger on the street. People want an answer, a definitive one I sometimes feel. But I have to tell them that this is Le Mans we're talking about. There's a natural tendency to sit on the fence ingrained in my psyche.

So what am I saying this time around? Nothing. A shrug of my shoulders suffices for my pre-event predictions this year. It really is wide open and will remain so until we see the cars on track during the Test Day the weekend ahead of the race. Only then will we get a first indication of what's going to happen over the course of the double-points round of the World Endurance Championship. And, really, it will be a first indication.

The Test Day isn't always a clear barometer of form when it comes to the race. Think back to last year, and Porsche appeared strong over six hours of running that Sunday. It was right up there in the Hypercar timesheets, and then never really looked so strong again, notwithstanding Kevin Estre's mighty qualifying lap to put his 963 LMDh on the pole.

But the Test Day is the first time we see the cars on track with the Balance of Performance in place for Le Mans. The BoP might not determine who wins the race, but it will probably dictate who can win and who can't. It will certainly help me with my predictions, or at least allow me to start narrowing down my choices.

Ferrari is going to be up there, of that I have no doubt. And Toyota will be in the mix: it will wring every ounce of performance out of its machinery whatever BoP it is given. The Cadillac is always strong around the Circuit de la Sarthe, and I'm going to say Porsche will be up there, even if hasn't made much of a start to the defence of its WEC drivers' title. BMW and Alpine have shown the kind of form in the early rounds of the WEC that must make them contenders.

So that leaves only Peugeot and Aston Martin. The French manufacturer has so far shown only flashes of form this year, while the British newcomer has clearly been learning on the job with its new contender. But the goal of the rulemakers – the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA – is that there will be what they call “100% convergence” under the BoP. If they hit that target then everyone has the potential to be in the hunt. And given the latest safety car rules that help keep everything close, staying in the hunt is easier than it once was.

Nine cars from four manufacturers finished on the lead lap last year. As excited as some were about that, the reality was that there were only two manufacturers in the fight at the finish. It was Ferrari versus Toyota again. And when the race got to the all-important crunch laps, it was one car from each camp battling it out.

The old adage that you only need two cars to make a motor race was reinforced by the events in the final hour or so. Once the second cars from Ferrari and Toyota had dropped out of contention, it really was a two-horse race. The other seven cars on the lead lap were little more than bit players.

As excited as I am about Le Mans this year, I don't care how many cars finish on the same lap. What is important is the battle at the front. *Right* at the front. Think back to 2011 and one of the greatest editions ever. No one was looking behind the Peugeot chasing down the Audi that ultimately prevailed by just under 14 seconds, proclaiming there were another five or whatever cars on the lead lap. There weren't and it didn't matter. Everyone was focusing on the final stages of a battle that had raged for the whole race between two racing cars that did their thing in different ways.

I have little doubt that we will get another close battle, but will it be quite so exciting as back in 2011? Possibly,

***“I don't care how many cars finish
on the same lap. What's important
is the battle right at the front”***

but definitely not as intriguing. The BoP and the safety car rules introduced in 2023 are designed to close the field up and promote close racing by what an old-school racer like me regards as artificial means. They represent what long-time Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director Pascal Vasselon once described as the ‘Americanisation’ of endurance racing. No one can complain, however, not with eight manufacturers on the grid in Hypercar and at least another three on the way.

So, I won't be complaining if I have to put off finally answering that question about who is going to win the 93rd edition of the Le Mans 24 Hours until deep into the race. How about after the final round of pitstops in hour 24? 🏆

P86 LE MANS GUIDE



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CAN ANYONE STOP FERRARI?

*While there's no doubting its form, the Prancing Horse downplays its favourite status.
And if the powers that be nail the BoP, the answer could indeed be anyone...*

GARY WATKINS





BOLDONI/DPPI



JEP/GETTY IMAGES



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Top: Ferrari leads at Imola;
middle: Toyota, Porsche its big
2024 rivals; below: Alpine,
BMW have taken strides



MORSE/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES



THEKKAVIL/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

There's no getting away from it. Ferrari is favourite going into the Le Mans 24 Hours. No other conclusion can be reached based on its wins in the blue riband round of the World Endurance Championship over the past two years and its clean sweep of victories in the opening three rounds of the series this year. But no one likes the favourite's tag going into any race, let alone the French enduro, and the best you will get from the Italian manufacturer is that it is "among the favourites".

Those words, from the mouth of Ferrari performance and simulation co-ordinator Mauro Barbieri, are not the cop-out they may seem. Allocating favourite status in the modern world of international sportscar racing isn't as easy as it sounds – or as it once was. There's an elephant in the room, something of which Barbieri can't speak. And it is the Balance of Performance. Ferrari, and any of the other seven manufacturers lining up in Hypercar, cannot be sure where it is going to be in the pecking order until it sees the BoP ahead of the Test Day on the weekend preceding the race. The same goes for the rest of the world when it comes to analysing the chances of eight marques.

"When I look at the opposition, I cannot say we are the favourite; we are among the group of the favourites," offers Barbieri, one of the senior engineers regularly put up by Ferrari to talk to the WEC press corps. "And then Le Mans is unique – so many things can happen before and during the race. You might start as a favourite and end up nowhere on Sunday morning; you might start as an underdog and win."

Barbieri namechecks almost the entire field when asked about who Ferrari will be battling with come the race at Le Mans. He mentions Porsche and Toyota, its big rivals in the WEC last year, Alpine and BMW as opponents who have taken strides forward for this season, and then Cadillac as a regular if inconsistent frontrunner over the past two campaigns. He's only missed out Peugeot and Aston Martin!

Ferrari is understandably sitting on the fence. Picking out the manufacturers who will be fighting with the Prancing Horse over the course of the 93rd running of Le Mans on 14-15 June isn't an easy task. If the BoP is correct it could be all of them. The Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA, which jointly run the series, have a stated target of "100% convergence" of the full Hypercar field for this year's BoP.

A look at the results of the first three rounds of the series at Qatar, Imola and Spa would suggest the rulemakers haven't achieved that goal as yet. Not given Ferrari's clean sweep of victories. But there is evidence that the new methodology used to calculate the BoP is working, even if there has been immense disquiet about the balance – or lack of it – over the opening races of 2025. It has gone unsaid, of course. Manufacturers, along with their teams and drivers, are precluded from talking about the BoP publicly for fear

of sanction from the rulemakers. It's written in black and white in the sporting regulations that it is not permissible.

But the fact is that the manufacturers voted for the new system. The BoP is now worked out on the basis of a car's performance in the previous three races, so for Qatar that was the final trio of rounds of the 2024 season. The advantage of the Ferrari 499P Le Mans Hypercar has diminished round on round over the first leg of this year's campaign, which backs up the hypothesis that it was Maranello that made the biggest gain over the winter. If you accept that, and not everyone does in the WEC paddock, then the ACO and the FIA have a real handle on the BoP for this year.

That is significant even if Le Mans has its own BoP, one not based on race performance in the previous three events. That's because the Circuit de la Sarthe, at 8.47 miles and with four long drags, is like no other on the calendar. The powers that be will be using their data from the opening races to simulate the performance of the cars to work out the BoP for the big one rather than feeding their figures into the computer and hitting 'go'. There's an algorithm for each car that has been communicated to each manufacturer.

A new element of the BoP came on stream at Le Mans last year. So-called power gain adjusts the maximum power of each car up or down above 250km/h (155mph) in an attempt to balance the acceleration profiles and top speeds of the cars. On the assumption that the FIA and the ACO now have a better understanding of power gain after a year's worth of experience, the gaps between the cars should be narrowed further.

Porsche, for example, took fourth position behind two Ferraris and a Toyota last year. The best of its 963 LMDhs was just 36s in arrears of the winning 499P at the chequered flag, but in reality it wasn't a genuine victory contender: it couldn't race with the cars ahead of it come crunch time. The reason for that was that the car was down on straightline speed and lacked what might be termed raceability.

It wouldn't take much of a swing in terms of the performance of the cars, whether that's courtesy of BoP or not, to bring more manufacturers into contention for the victory this time. Remember, last year nine cars finished on the lead lap at Le Mans. That's a record, and by some margin, given that never before had more than two cars >>

Last year's Le Mans winners, the #50 Ferrari crew of Antonio Fuoco, Miguel Molina and Nicklas Nielsen



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“LAST YEAR OUR BIGGEST ACHILLES’ HEEL WAS A TOP-SPEED DEFICIT”

finished on the same lap at the head of the field. New safety car rules introduced in 2023 with a wave-around that allows cars in danger of going a lap down to move around to the back of the queue had a lot to do with that, but so too did the Hypercar class coming to maturity. That’s both the respective programmes of the manufacturers taking part, and the BoP process.

Toyota has the most mature programme of all. The GR010 HYBRID LMH has been racing since 2021 and Toyota Gazoo Racing is a well-oiled operation that always gets the most out of its machinery. That much is clear so far this season. In the races it has overperformed in comparison with the one-lap pace it has shown in qualifying. It seems inconceivable that a manufacturer that has missed out on victory over the past two years by a cumulative margin of little more than 90 seconds after 48 hours of racing won’t be in the mix.

Toyota took manufacturers’ honours last year, while Porsche claimed the drivers’ title in the WEC. Porsche has made a disappointing start to its title defence. Like Toyota it hasn’t had the one-lap pace, but unlike Toyota it hasn’t been on point strategically: the German manufacturer hasn’t been able to magic results out of the bag with some left-field tactical thinking.

It knows where its deficit lay last year and has opted to take matters into its own hands ahead of Le Mans whether or not power gain comes to its aid. “Last year at Le Mans our biggest Achilles’ heel was a top-speed deficit,” explains Porsche Penske Motorsport managing director Jonathan Diuguid. “We are trying to work on set-up to try to reduce the drag of

the car. Handling and balance-wise the cars drove well – obviously Kevin [Estre in the #6 entry] was able to put it on pole – but our raceability was just poor last year.”

Cadillac was the final manufacturer to finish on the lead lap with its regular WEC entry run by Chip Ganassi Racing last year with a seventh-place finish. Like Porsche it wasn’t truly in the fight at the end, but it could have been and arguably even should have been. The performance of the best of the three V-Series.Rs was undone in the final hours of the race by an issue with the underfloor – the suggestion is that there was a gaping hole in it! Neither the exact nature of the issue nor its cause has been confirmed by Caddy.

The V-Series.R, the big underachiever in the WEC since its arrival in the first wave of LMDh machinery in 2023, has so far been quick at Le Mans. It notched up what so far stands as its one and only podium in the series with Ganassi, again for the team’s regular WEC entry, in 2023. That was despite an oil consumption issue that resulted in vital seconds being lost at every pitstop for a quick top-up for much of the race.

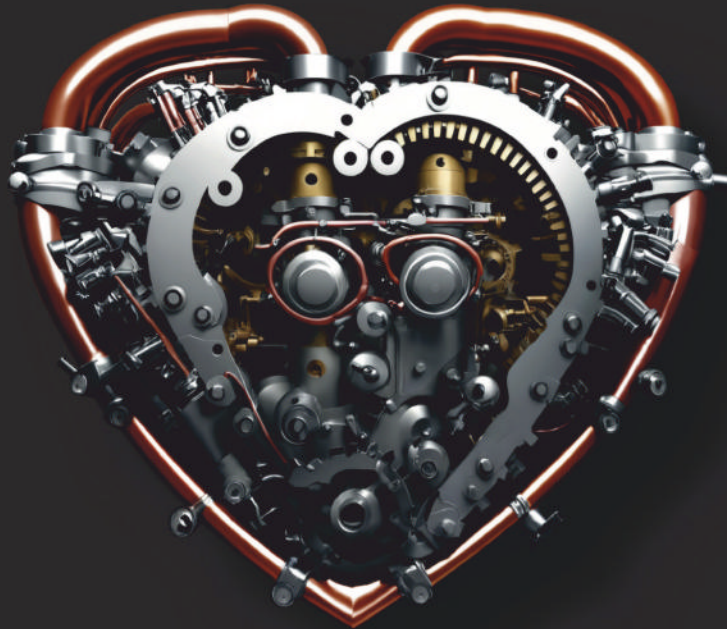
Were it not for this problem, there’s every reason to believe Cadillac would have been right at the sharp end battling with Ferrari and Toyota rather than a lap down at the finish. The additional Ganassi car, its regular IMSA SportsCar Championship entry, proved the pace of the V-Series.R around Le Mans. It was up there with the 499P and the GR010 on the averages, though a series of incidents restricted the car to fourth. This time Cadillac has numbers on its side with a four-car entry. As well as the two V-Series.Rs from Jota, now its factory team in the WEC, Action Express Racing returns for a third straight Le Mans and is joined by fellow IMSA competitor Wayne Taylor Racing (see p100).

Alpine and BMW are the big upward movers in the WEC so far this year, building on the improvement they showed with their respective A424 and M Hybrid V8 LMDh challengers as the 2024 season drew to a close. Alpine could potentially >>

Below left: Cadillac finished on the podium in 2023, and in 2025 a bolstered line-up is led by Jota-run pair (right)



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*Above: Peugeot insists that it is in it to win it.
Below: Aston's aim is for a reliable run to the top 10*

have won at Spa in May, Ferrari certainly thought so, though the French manufacturer itself wasn't so sure. BMW was best of the rest behind Ferrari in Qatar and at Imola in April in both qualifying and on race pace.

The trend for Peugeot's 9X8 2024 LMH has been less clear cut. But it has filled the best of the rest spot in qualifying and led a race on merit (both at Spa). Strategically the in-house Peugeot Sport squad has looked increasingly strong (except for Spa), and technical director Olivier Jansonnie insists the French manufacturer is "going to Le Mans to try to win".

He agrees that if the BoP hits the target of 100% convergence, who wins and who doesn't will come down to reliability, strategy and the skill of the drivers. "That's the plan behind it," he states. "That's the way it should be." ❧

ASTON MARTIN'S TOP-TIER RETURN

Is it too early to talk about Aston Martin as a potential winner at the Le Mans 24 Hours? Almost certainly, but the Valkyrie Le Mans Hypercar has been making progress through the opening leg of this year's World Endurance Championship and over in the IMSA SportsCar Championship.

The British manufacturer and The Heart of Racing factory team is going into its maiden Le Mans with realistic aspirations. No one involved is saying that the Valkyrie is going to be challenging Ferrari and whoever at the front of the field. The aim is to be competitive, says Aston head of endurance motorsport Adam Carter, while THOR team principal Ian James suggests that a reliable run is priority number one.

The Valkyrie undertook a Le Mans simulation at Motorland Aragon at the end of last year and then completed another endurance test at Sebring in March. The car that finished ninth in the Sebring 12 Hours IMSA round stayed on at the Florida venue and completed another 16 hours.

"I wouldn't say we have a bulletproof car, but we were very encouraged to do close to 30 hours at Sebring without touching the car," relates James. "We're going in with our eyes wide open, but if we can get to the end without any issues and get a car in the top 10 that would be a real feather in our cap."



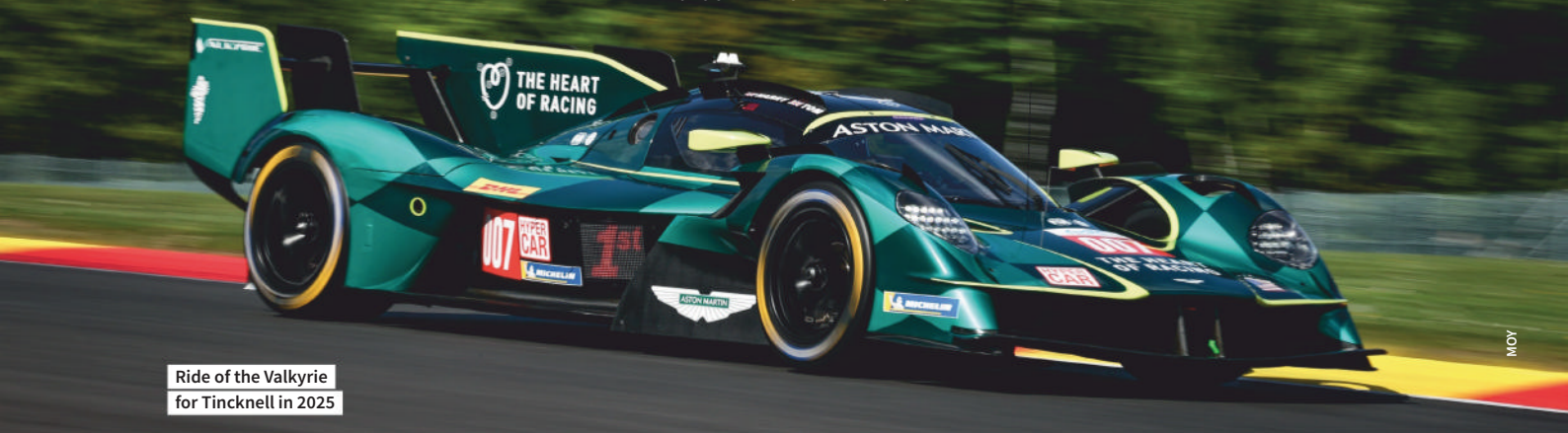
JEP/GETTY IMAGES

FROM CLASS STRUGGLE TO POSSIBLE KINGS

The Brits who have tasted glory in the lower divisions at Le Mans now want one thing: an overall victory

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES



Ride of the Valkyrie
for Tincknell in 2025

MOY



BARSALI/INURPHOTO

HARRY TINCKNELL

When Harry Tincknell was about to walk out onto the podium after winning LMP2 at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2014, he received some sage advice from his manager, Allan McNish: “Be prepared for the best view in the world.”

Those words from a three-time Le Mans winner didn't ready a raw 22-year-old Le Mans debutant for the scenes he was about to witness. “You go out there on the podium over the pitlane, and it's like being a rock star on stage at Wembley Stadium,” recalls Tincknell, who'd just taken class honours aboard the Jota Zytek-Nissan Z11SN shared with Oliver Turvey and Simon Dolan. “There are people as far as the eye can see on the track. The view is insane, mindblowing.”

“I don't normally do emotion, but I get emotional even today when I think about it. It took me a couple of years to realise what a big achievement it was. You need to have the odd disaster to put it into context. For me that was LMP1 with Nissan in 2015.”

The next time Tincknell climbed onto the top step of the Le Mans podium, the experience was rather different. He was drafted into the Aston Martin Racing line-up to drive a Vantage GTE with Alex Lynn and Maxime Martin in 2020, the year that Le Mans



J BLOXHAM

was pushed back until September as a result of the COVID pandemic and took place in front of empty grandstands. “It was certainly different: up on the podium, you could hear the singular claps of our mechanics down below,” he remembers. “The whole experience wasn't as good as thousands of people cheering, but the euphoria was the same.”

Tincknell now has a chance to add an overall victory to his Le Mans CV with Aston and The Heart of Racing squad, driving a Valkyrie Le Mans Hypercar alongside Tom Gamble and Ross Gunn. “LMP2 then GTE Pro, so now I've got to do it overall,” he reckons. “No one has ever won those three classes at Le Mans, so I'd better put that right.”

2014 LMP2 win
Jota Zytek



2020 GTE Pro win
Aston Martin Racing



2025 Hypercar
Aston Martin
THOR Team



JEP

2020 LMP2 win
United ORECA



2025 Hypercar
AF Corse

PHIL HANSON

The photos tell their own story. Phil Hanson and his team-mates at United Autosports, with whom he's just won LMP2 at Le Mans in 2020, are wearing masks in the year when COVID resulted in a very different atmosphere.

"I wish I could have taken the mask off on the podium, but at the time it was taken very seriously," reflects Hanson, who won Le Mans at the fourth time of asking, sharing his United ORECA-Gibson 07 with fellow Brit Paul di Resta and Filipe Albuquerque. "I'd loved to have had the normal Le Mans victory experience with all the fans. Even when I got home, me and my friends had to cut short our celebrations because there was a midnight curfew. But I was happy to take it regardless of the situation: you don't know how many times Le Mans is going to look on you unfavourably."

Le Mans didn't favour Hanson in the years following 2020 before his move in 2024 to Hypercar in one of Jota's customer Porsche 963 LMDhs. "Hypercar was always the goal from the

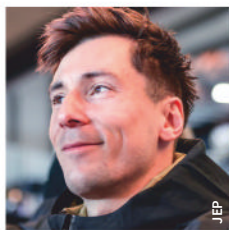


moment it was announced and what I did in P2 got me here," explains Hanson, who has moved to the Ferrari 499P LMH run as a customer entry by AF Corse, sharing with Robert Kubica and Yifei Ye. "If I were to win overall, it will be interesting to see if I feel like I've won it for the first time or the second."

"Back in 2020, LMP2 didn't feel any less significant, because to my mind it was the most competitive class. Maybe it will feel like the bigger achievement. The only thing I know is that we won't have the curse of having to wear masks."

JEP





2020 GTE Pro win
Aston Martin Racing

2025 Hypercar
Cadillac Hertz
Team Jota

ALEX LYNN

Alex Lynn knows all about standing on the Le Mans podium. He's been up there as a class winner and as a top-three finisher overall. The emotions he experienced were quite different.

His 2020 GTE Pro victory with Aston Martin together with Harry Tincknell and Maxime Martin stands as one of the highlights of his career, the absence of a crowd or no. "A win is a win, it didn't matter there were no fans," he asserts. "That was the most complete drive of my career. Sometimes you feel at one with the car, and that was a year when the car was there for me every corner of every lap."

Three years later Lynn, now as a Cadillac driver, finished third in Hypercar at Le Mans with Earl Bamber and Richard Westbrook in year one of the General Motors marque's V-Series.R programme. He learned that being up on the podium brings the failure to win into focus.

"You are a metre away from the winners wearing the [Rolex Daytona] watch, but you are a million miles away in terms of emotion," states Lynn. "You look at the guys next to you and think you want to be



2020 class win contrasts
with later overall podium

them next time. That's what keeps the hunger high."

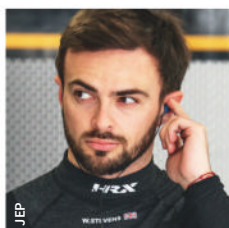
That hunger is driving both Lynn and Jota, which has taken over Cadillac's WEC programme from the Ganassi team for 2025, in pursuit of overall Le Mans victory this year. "We know that this car can win the 24 Hours and I know how special it's going to be if we do it," says Lynn, who is teamed with Will Stevens and Norman Nato. "That's why we are pushing so hard at Cadillac and Jota, and for me as the driver it's what drives you to do everything possible to try to win, that little bit extra in the gym or whatever."



Lynn's #97 Aston
takes the flag in 2020



Stevens's Jota squad now fields the Caddy



2017 GTE Am win
JMW Ferrari



2022 LMP2 win
Jota ORECA



2025 Hypercar
Cadillac Hertz
Team Jota

WILL STEVENS

For Will Stevens, the Le Mans podium has become almost a home from home: he's been up there four times in nine starts, beginning with a second-place finish in LMP2 on his debut in 2016.

"As soon as I did my first Le Mans in 2016, it became something I knew I wanted to win, not only in category, but also overall," recalls Stevens. "The podium is one of the things that makes Le Mans unique. The way you look down on all the people makes it all very rock and roll."

Stevens is in a unique position among the Brits going for gold this year to compare and contrast the full experience of winning in the different classes. "I know from winning in GTE Am in 2017 that people start to drift off a bit," he points out. "There were definitely more people down there when I won in P2 because the podium is slightly earlier."

The win in GTE Am aboard JMW Motorsport's Ferrari 488 GTE with Dries Vanthoor and Rob Smith whetted his appetite for more victories. He became a stalwart of the P2 class at Le Mans and beyond, but started to wonder whether the victory he craved would ever come. "I was always in a car that, if we had a good race, could win," he says. That made victory with Antonio Felix da Costa and Roberto



LMP2 a shop window for Hypercar hopefuls

Gonzalez in a Jota ORECA in 2022 "all the sweeter".

Stevens's stint in LMP2 coincided with a time when the talent in class all had an eye on what was to come in Hypercar. "We were all trying to prove ourselves," he reflects. "Le Mans was critical because we knew the manufacturers were looking at what we could do in the biggest races."

Stevens made the move to the WEC top class with Jota in 2023 when it got its hands on the first customer Porsche 963 LMDh to race. He has now moved over with the team with Cadillac. "Now I've done it in two different categories, I need to tick off the overall," he declares. "I'm going to do what it takes to make it happen."



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2020 LMP2 win
United ORECA



2025 Hypercar
Peugeot TotalEnergies

PAUL DI RESTA

"I guess the only thing you can say about it is that there will only ever be one year like it," smiles Paul di Resta who, like team-mate Phil Hanson, celebrated LMP2 victory in 2020 in the strange circumstances of the COVID-hit edition.

"It was odd with no crowd, but as a team it didn't change how we approached the race and took nothing away from the achievement.

"The end of the race at Le Mans is an emotional time, even if you haven't been successful. You and everyone within the team has poured your heart into it. The comedown is quite big, and it's definitely easier if you are dripping in champagne. Standing up there on the podium looking down on all the fans must lift you to another level."

Tentative talks with Peugeot about joining its LMH programme had begun before the P2 victory. "It was after then that I really got into discussions," recalls di Resta, who shares his Peugeot 9X8 2024 LMH with Mikkel Jensen and Jean-Eric Vergne.



Champagne helps with emotional comedown

"It was about that time that we all realised Hypercar was going to be something big.

"I signed up with Peugeot to join a manufacturer with a winning mentality to try to win Le Mans overall. I know that the team is ready, but so much depends on whether you've got the car under you, and we won't know that until we get there. To win the biggest race in the world as part of a French team would be massive."



Peugeot picked for "winning mentality"

HOW TO TAILOR A TEAM FOR LE MANS

*Wayne Taylor Racing is at the 24 Hours – at last – with Cadillac.
But it's not as simple as transplanting the IMSA team and car to France*

GARY WATKINS

Wayne Taylor has been talking about taking his eponymous team to the Le Mans 24 Hours for years. With victories at the Daytona, Sebring and Petit Le Mans enduros under its belt, a win at the French race is the next box to be ticked by Wayne Taylor Racing. But taking a successful operation over from the IMSA SportsCar Championship to compete at the World Endurance Championship blue riband isn't as simple as it might sound, even with common regulations across the two series.

WTR won't be rolling one of its Cadillac V-Series.R LMDhs straight from an IMSA event onto a plane destined for France. The schedule involved in the team's maiden Le Mans assault and subtle differences in the specification of the cars racing in IMSA and the WEC preclude that, says WTR general manager Travis Houge. He explains that there have been a lot of what he calls "moving pieces" in bringing together the team's one-car bid for Le Mans glory.

The schedule means that WTR will have at least one V-Series.R on track four weekends in a row: the race and the Test Day the preceding weekend sit between rounds of the North American series in Detroit and at Watkins Glen. That would mean it would need a dedicated car for Le Mans, even

"THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF 'MOVING PIECES' IN BRINGING TOGETHER THE BID FOR GLORY"

if the specs were the same. It also has implications on the duties it will assign to staff across a busy month. WTR kicked off its preparations in earnest on the confirmation of its Le Mans grid slot at the start of March. "That's when we started to assemble the parts and pieces in order to build the car for Le Mans," Houge explains. "The differences are mainly aero bits [a knock-on from the different wind tunnels used for the respective homologations in IMSA and WEC] and then the different wiring harness and scrutineering looms. They are long lead-time items, and most of the stuff didn't show up until 12 May."

That was just four days before WTR's Le Mans racer, fully decked out in the livery of Mobil 1, its new sponsor for the race, was given a shakedown in WEC spec at Putnum Park near its Indianapolis workshops. Three days after that, the car was in the air headed for Europe.

"It feels like we've been building cars since November," reckons Houge of the workload that has followed WTR's return to the Cadillac fold at the conclusion of last year's

IMSA campaign, after four years with Acura. The schedule was complicated by a crash at the season-opening Daytona 24 Hours in January. What became the Le Mans car briefly replaced the shunted chassis in testing for the run-up to the Sebring 12 Hours. That was important, he says, "so we weren't taking something to Le Mans that hadn't run before".

WTR will have 40 personnel at Le Mans, with around 25 of them operational staff working in its pitbox. They haven't all come from its two-car IMSA V-Series.R squad: crew members have also been brought from its Lamborghini programmes in GT Daytona in IMSA and the one-make Super Trofeo series in North America.

"We've been able to use people from our other programmes to fill our Le Mans roster and our workshop roster," explains Houge. "We have to have equivalent to what we have at Le Mans back at base to turn the cars around for the next IMSA race. We need the same calibre of people building up the IMSA cars because the rest of the crew aren't going to see them between Detroit and Watkins Glen." Houge points out that the majority of the Le Mans personnel will only get one night in their own beds after Detroit prior to crossing the Pond. After the race, it will be straight to upstate New York from France.

The team has had what might be termed 'a fixer' in France for a couple of months. "A pair of boots on the ground to help us with the logistics," is how Houge puts it. He is not foreseeing any problems with the language barrier: a junior engineer on WTR's GTD and Super Trofeo teams was born and bred in the Le Mans region and will be shadowing Houge through the week.

WTR has opted not to bolster its staff with a WEC or Le Mans specialist to smooth its transition. Instead it will be leaning on the experience of Jota, Cadillac's full-time representative in the WEC, and fellow IMSA team Action Express Racing, which is back for its third consecutive Le Mans, in what is being billed as a "one-team" approach. There's also the experience of its drivers: Ricky and Jordan Taylor (Wayne's sons) and Filipe Albuquerque have 29 Le Mans starts between them.

"Those Le Mans participations will come in handy," predicts Houge. "We do have a couple of guys who've worked at Le Mans before, and Brian Pillar [WTR technical director] was over there a couple of years ago with Ricky when he was driving for Tower Motorsports in LMP2. We've been watching past races and reading the rules, and then it's going to be about flicking a switch, turning off IMSA rules in our minds when we leave Detroit, and turning on European rules when we arrive in France." ❧

Aero and wiring parts are chief differences between IMSA and WEC specs



CADILLAC



CADILLAC

IMSA calendar means a dedicated car was needed for WTR's Le Mans assault



LEVITT/GETTY IMAGES



CADILLAC

Driver trio's combined 29 Le Mans 24 Hours starts should be a boon

THE BUZZ AROUND LE MANS FOR 2025

*From tweaked qualifying procedures, to sports heroes
almost as famous as Jacky Ickx and Tom Kristensen*

GARY WATKINS

MORE HYPE FOR HYPERPOLE

Hyperpole qualifying, introduced back in 2020, is changing for this year. It is now a three-round rather than a two-round affair in an attempt to increase the drama and jeopardy. There's another twist, too. The Hypercars will run separately from the other classes on track: so no more excuses about traffic on a hot lap!

First qualifying again takes place on Wednesday evening, but rather than an hour-long affair in which all 62 cars take to the track at once, the 21-car Hypercar field has been split off from the LMGT3 and LMP2 classes. Both sets of cars get 30 minutes each, with the top 15 cars in Hypercar and 12 each in P2 and LMGT3 progressing to round two on Thursday.

Five Hypercars will be knocked out in the 20-minute Hyperpole 1 session, and the first five rows of the grid will then be decided over 15 minutes in Hyperpole 2. In the other categories, eight cars will go through from H1 to H2, as the sessions are being called.

In Hypercar and P2, driver choice is free, but the tweak in the qualifying procedure in LMGT3 for the regular World Endurance Championship races is carried over for Le Mans. The mandatory bronze-rated driver must take the wheel for the opening session, but after that the team of a car making the cut can decide who to put in for H1. But if that car proceeds, the same driver cannot take the wheel in H2.

So does a team throw caution to the wind and put its professional driver – a platinum or gold – in straight away to increase the chances of making it to H2? Or does it hope that its silver is up to the job to enable its pro to go for pole in H2? Decisions, decisions.



Aston's colour matches
its sound for appeal

A GREEN ASTON MARTIN GOING FOR GOLD

Aston Martin is back chasing outright honours at Le Mans for the first time since 2011. But you have to go back much further to find a factory Aston competing

at or near the sharp end of the grid bedecked in British Racing Green. It was way back 1963 when two Project DP214s competed as prototypes. What's not to like about a pair of Valkyrie Le Mans Hypercars running in Britain's national racing colours? They look as good as they sound.



No risk of GT traffic
hindering Hypercars

VANDELVE/ EURASIA SPORT IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



2024 LMP2 winner had two rookies in driver line-up

THE BATTLE FOR P1 IN P2

Seventeen cars battle it out in LMP2 at Le Mans. How many of them are potential winners? Probably the majority, reckons Richard Dean, whose United Autosports squad took its second class victory in 2024.

“On paper half the grid can definitely win it,” says the Briton. “And if s*** happens, probably the other half can too. Look at last year, and we won with a car that undoubtedly wasn’t the bookies’ favourite because it had two Le Mans rookies [Nolan Siegel and Bijoy Garg sharing the ORECA-Gibson 07 with Oliver Jarvis]. Our other car was probably stronger, but s*** happened [alternator failure included].”

Dean’s suggestion that its 2024 entry in the pro-am P2 subclass – in which bronze-rated Ben Keating joined Filipe Albuquerque and Ben Hanley – was stronger is interesting. The latest safety car rules, introduced for 2023, can allow teams to gain back a lost lap and therefore mitigate the handicap of having a bronze rather than a silver in the line-up.

It’s worth pointing out that a pro-am car has already won in the European Le Mans Series this year, Francois Perrodo triumphing with Matthieu Vaxiviere and Alessio Rovera driving an AF Corse-run ORECA at Barcelona in April (below). There’s all to play for in P2 this year.



JEP/GETTY IMAGES



JEP/GETTY IMAGES

TF Sport 'Vette kicked off season with Qatar victory

LMGT3: AS WIDE OPEN AS IT GETS

Twelve months ago, the Manthey Porsche team arrived at Le Mans on the back of two out of three LMGT3 WEC victories, and a podium in the one it didn’t win. Victory in the big one followed for the 911 GT3-R shared by Richard Lietz, Morris Schuring and Yasser Shahin. Year two of the new class has yielded wins for three different manufacturers over the pre-Le Mans leg of the WEC.

Porsche with Manthey, Chevrolet with TF Sport and Ferrari with AF Corse have taken the laurels so far, and of those three marques only the last named has made it

onto the podium twice. Seven of the nine manufacturers in class have made it into the top three. This year there is no form guide to tear up.

“It’s wide open,” predicts Tom Ferrier, whose TF squad won first time out in Qatar in February with Ben Keating, Jonny Edgar and Daniel Juncadella. “After the first three races you couldn’t point to a car and say it is going to be ‘the one’. There’s been an ebb and flow in the pace of the cars so far.”

Ferrier reckons it will not be possible to begin making predictions until closer to the start of track action with the Test Day on the Sunday before the race. He can’t say those words, of course, but he’s talking about the Balance of Performance.



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TRACK RESURFACED JULY '24

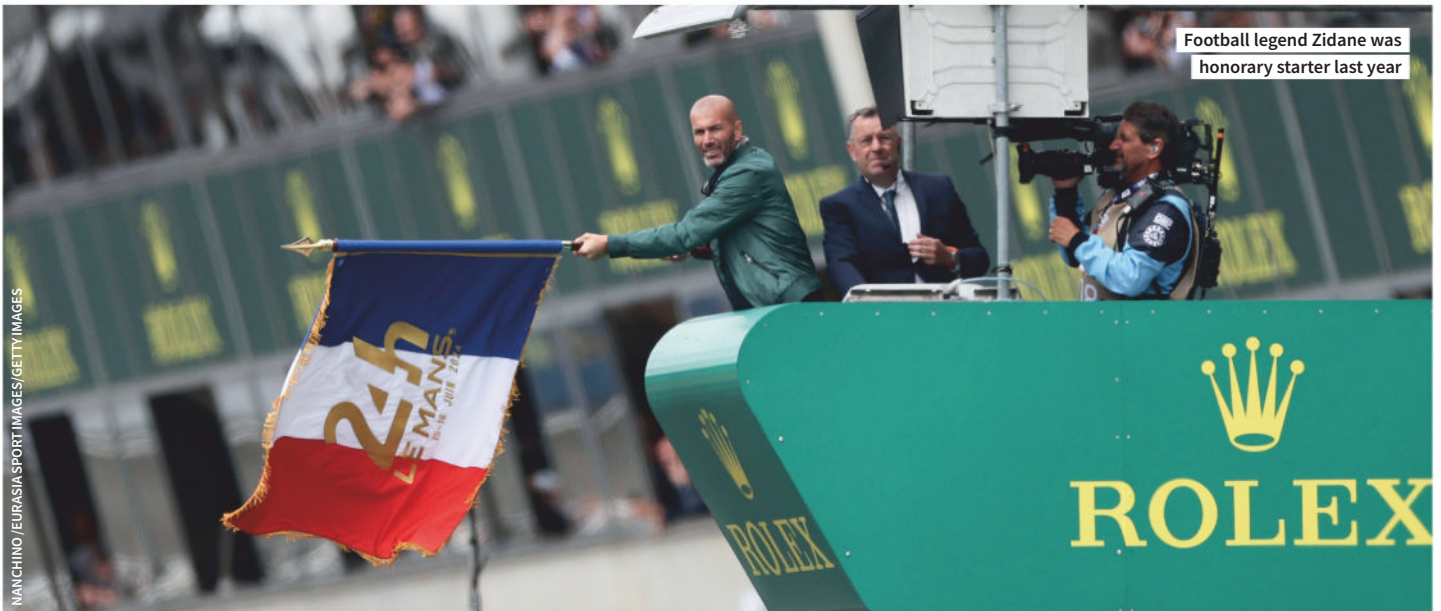
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GRANADA/SPAIN





Football legend Zidane was honorary starter last year

THE GREATS WHO FLY THE FLAG

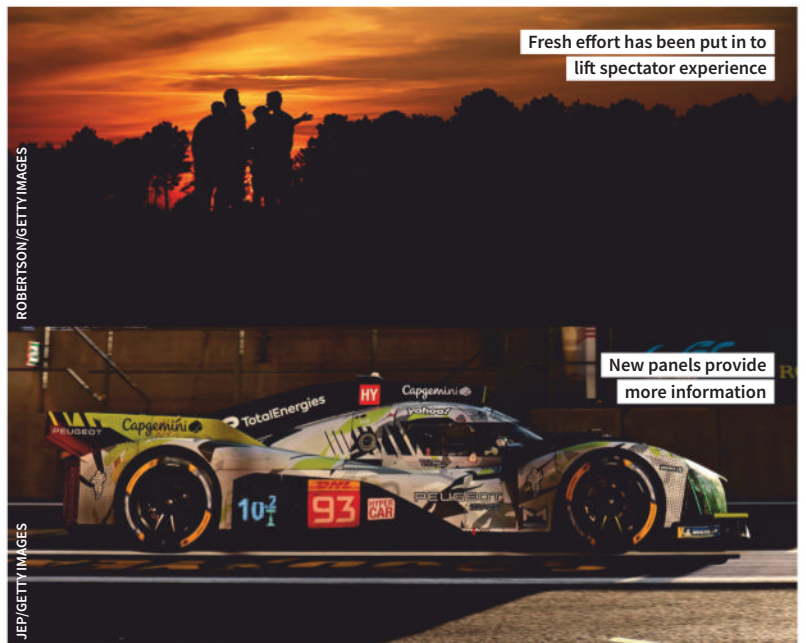
Tom Kristensen and Jacky Ickx never miss a Le Mans, and the two all-time greats of endurance racing will be joined this year by a legend from another sport. Eight-time Wimbledon men's singles champion Roger Federer will wave the cars off at the start of the race.

He's not the first tennis player to fill the so-called honorary starter role. Rafael Nadal, his great rival, was on hand to do the flag waving in the first year that his fellow countryman Fernando Alonso contested the race – and won it – with Toyota back in 2018.

Picking a star from the sporting world to wave off the race has become the norm for the ACO. Last year, it was Zinedine Zidane, a football World Cup winner with France in 1998, and in 2023 basketball legend LeBron James. It hasn't always been that way. From the creation of the position at the first post-Second World War edition of the great race in 1949, it was generally filled by politicians and motorsport and automotive industry bigwigs.



Ickx's presence can always be counted on



Fresh effort has been put in to lift spectator experience

New panels provide more information

MORE ROOM FOR A VIEW

The Automobile Club de l'Ouest has been striving to enhance the spectator experience at the Circuit de la Sarthe over recent seasons. For this year the developments include a new viewing bank at a prime location that all fans with petrol in their veins should sample.

New spectator banking has been built on the inside of Karting corner, the long right-hander that's often incorrectly labelled as part of the Porsche Curves. It will offer a bird's eye view of one of the most challenging parts of the track for

the first time. There's also a new grandstand at Maison Blanche across the track, as well as a new fan zone named after Tertre Rouge corner but is actually adjacent to the Esses, old and 'new'.

Also new for this year in the WEC are the display panels on the sidepods of all the cars in Hypercar and LMGTC3. They can show a host of information, including race position, pitstop time and the amount of energy a car has left for the remainder of its stint. They replace the leader lights, which show when a car is running in the top three in class and remain in place for LMP2.



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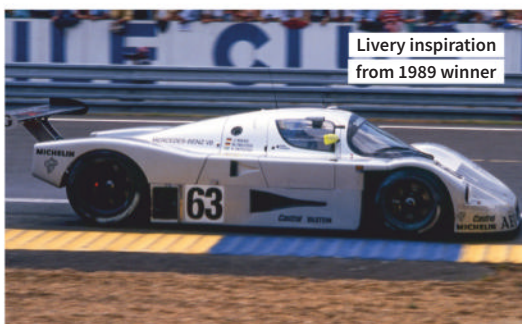
Trio comprises the two WEC entries and one from ELMS

MERCEDES BRAVES IT OUT IN SILVER

Mercedes is back at a race it has won twice for the first time since 1999 and its disastrous campaign with the CLR GT1 contender. Billing it as a return of the 'Silver Arrows' would have been slightly forward given that the Iron Lynx Mercedes-AMG GT3s have been running in matte black in the WEC so far this season. Then the German manufacturer announced that the cars would race at the big one in the famed silver livery of their predecessors.

That must have been a decision laboured upon high within the German manufacturer. Its return comes 70 years after the Le Mans disaster of 1955 that resulted in the death of more than 80 spectators when Pierre Levegh's 300 SLR somersaulted into the crowd. Mercedes withdrew from circuit racing and would remain out for more than 30 years.

The three Iron Lynx Mercs will race in a livery celebrating its last victory at the French enduro in 1989 with Sauber, the team with which it had officially re-entered sportscar racing the previous season. The livery gives a nod to the Sauber-Mercedes C9s that took a 1-2 finish 36 years ago.



Livery inspiration from 1989 winner

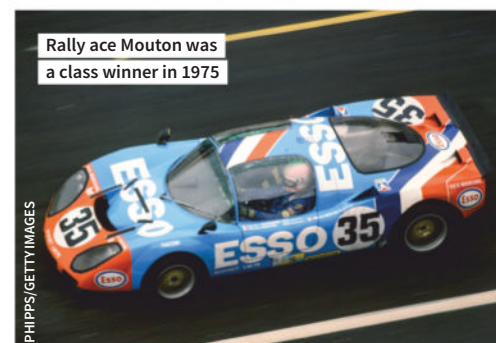


Chadwick has notched up a 2025 ELMS win

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE A DAME

There are five women on the grid for the 24 Hours and there is a Brit among them. Jamie Chadwick is set to become the first British female to race at Le Mans since 2008, when Amanda Stretton contested the event in a Chamberlain-Synergy Lola-AER B06/10 LMP1. The Indy NXT race winner is part of the Genesis marque's 'trajectory programme', a lead-in to its WEC entry with an LMDh next year, and has already triumphed in the European Le Mans Series this year with an IDEC Sport-run ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2.

A win would make her the first woman



Rally ace Mouton was a class winner in 1975

to take class honours at Le Mans since 1982. World Rally Championship runner-up Michele Mouton triumphed with Christine Dacremont and Marianne Hoepfner in the up-to-two-litre prototype class in 1975.

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HYPERCAR			
NO	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR
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5	Michael Christensen (DNK) Mathieu Jaminet (FRA) Julien Andlauer (FRA)	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963
6	Kevin Estre (FRA) Laurens Vanthoor (BEL) Matt Campbell (AUS)	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963
7	Mike Conway (GBR) Kamui Kobayashi (JPN) Nyck de Vries (NLD)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID
8	Sebastien Buemi (CHE) Brendon Hartley (NZL) Ryo Hirakawa (JPN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID
12	Alex Lynn (GBR) Will Stevens (GBR) Norman Nato (FRA)	Cadillac Hertz Team Jota	Cadillac V-Series.R
15	Dries Vanthoor (BEL) Raffaele Marciello (ITA) Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	BMW M Team WRT	BMW M Hybrid V8
20	Rene Rast (DEU) Robin Frijns (NLD) Sheldon van der Linde (ZAF)	BMW M Team WRT	BMW M Hybrid V8
35	Paul-Loup Chatin (FRA) Ferdinand Habsburg (AUT) Charles Milesi (FRA)	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech)	Alpine A424
36	Jules Gounon (FRA) Frederic Makowiecki (FRA) Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech)	Alpine A424
38	Earl Bamber (NZL) Sebastien Bourdais (FRA) Jenson Button (GBR)	Cadillac Hertz Team Jota	Cadillac V-Series.R
50	Antonio Fuoco (ITA) Nicklas Nielsen (DNK) Miguel Molina (ESP)	Ferrari AF Corse	Ferrari 499P
51	Alessandro Pier Guidi (ITA) James Calado (GBR) Antonio Giovinnazzi (ITA)	Ferrari AF Corse	Ferrari 499P
83	Robert Kubica (POL) Yifei Ye (CHN) Phil Hanson (GBR)	AF Corse	Ferrari 499P
93	Mikkel Jensen (DNK) Paul di Resta (GBR) Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	Peugeot TotalEnergies	Peugeot 9X8
94	Loic Duval (FRA) Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL) Malthe Jakobsen (DNK)	Peugeot TotalEnergies	Peugeot 9X8
99	Neel Jani (CHE) Nico Varrone (ARG) Nico Pino (CHI)	Proton Competition	Porsche 963
007	Harry Tincknell (GBR) Ross Gunn (GBR) Tom Gamble (GBR)	Aston Martin THOR Team	Aston Martin Valkyrie
009	Marco Sorensen (DNK) Alex Riberas (ESP) Roman de Angelis (CAN)	Aston Martin THOR Team	Aston Martin Valkyrie
101	Ricky Taylor (USA) Jordan Taylor (USA) Filipe Albuquerque (PRT)	Cadillac WTR	Cadillac V-Series.R
311	Jack Aitken (GBR) Felipe Drugovich (BRA) Frederik Vesti (DNK)	Cadillac Whelen (Action Express)	Cadillac V-Series.R
LMP2			
9	Reshad de Gerus (FRA) Maceo Capietto (FRA) Jonas Ried (DEU)	Iron Lynx-Proton	ORECA-Gibson 07
11	Rene Binder (AUT) Bent Viscaal (NLD) Giorgio Roda (ITA)	Proton Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07
16	Patrick Pilet (FRA) Ryan Cullen (GBR) Michael Jensen (DNK)	RLR M Sport	ORECA-Gibson 07
18	Andre Lotterer (DEU) Jamie Chadwick (GBR) Mathys Jaubert (FRA)	IDEC Sport	ORECA-Gibson 07
22	Renger van der Zande (NLD) Pietro Fittipaldi (BRA) David H Hansson (DNK)	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07
23	Oliver Jarvis (GBR) Ben Hanley (GBR) Daniel Schneider (BRA)	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07
24	Colin Braun (USA) Cem Bolukbasi (TUR) Naveen Rao (USA)	Nielsen Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07
25	Theo Pourchaire (FRA) Lorenzo Fluxa (ESP) Matthias Kaiser (LIE)	Algarve Pro Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07
28	Job van Uitert (NLD) Paul Lafargue (FRA) Sebastian Alvarez (MEX)	IDEC Sport	ORECA-Gibson 07
29	Mathias Beche (CHE) Clement Novalak (FRA) Rodrigo Sales (USA)	TDS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07
34	Luca Ghiotto (ITA) Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer (FRA) Nick Boulle (USA)	Inter Europol Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07
37	Tom Blomqvist (GBR) Tristan Vautier (FRA) Alex Malykhin (BLR)	IDEC Sport	ORECA-Gibson 07
43	Nick Yelloly (GBR) Tom Dillmann (FRA) Jakub Smiechowski (POL)	Inter Europol Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07
45	Nicky Catsburg (NLD) Alex Quinn (GBR) George Kurtz (USA)	Algarve Pro Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07
48	Franck Perera (FRA) Esteban Masson (FRA) Oliver Gray (GBR)	VDS Panis Racing (TDS Racing)	ORECA-Gibson 07
183	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT) Matthieu Vaxiviere (FRA) Francois Perrodo (FRA)	AF Corse	ORECA-Gibson 07
199	Dane Cameron (USA) Louis Deletraz (CHE) PJ Hyett (USA)	AO by TF	ORECA-Gibson 07
LMGT3			
10	Valentin Hasse-Clot (FRA) Eduardo Barrichello (BRA) Derek DeBoer (USA)	Racing Spirit of Leman (Prodrive)	Aston Martin Vantage GT3 Evo
13	Matt Bell (GBR) Lars Kern (DEU) Orey Fidani (CAN)	AWA Racing	Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R
21	Alessio Rovera (ITA) Simon Mann (GBR) Francois Heriau (FRA)	Vista AF Corse	Ferrari 296 GT3
27	Mattia Drudi (ITA) Zacharie Robichon (CAN) Ian James (GBR)	Heart of Racing Team (Prodrive)	Aston Martin Vantage GT3
31	Augusto Farfus (BRA) Timur Boguslavskiy (RUS) Yasser Shahin (AUS)	The Bend Team WRT	BMW M4 GT3 Evo
33	Daniel Juncadella (ESP) Jonny Edgar (GBR) Ben Keating (USA)	TF Sport	Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R
46	Kelvin van der Linde (ZAF) Valentino Rossi (ITA) Ahmad Al Harthy (OMN)	Team WRT	BMW M4 GT3 Evo
54	Davide Rigon (ITA) Francesco Castellacci (ITA) Thomas Flohr (CHE)	Vista AF Corse	Ferrari 296 GT3
57	Daniel Serra (BRA) Casper Stevenson (GBR) Takeshi Kimura (JPN)	Kessel Racing	Ferrari 296 GT3
59	Gregoire Saucy (CHE) Sebastien Baud (FRA) James Cottingham (GBR)	United Autosports	McLaren 720S GT3 Evo
60	Matteo Cairolì (ITA) Matteo Cressoni (ITA) Claudio Schiavoni (ITA)	Iron Lynx	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo
61	Maxime Martin (BEL) Lin Hodenus (NLD) Martin Berry (AUS)	Iron Lynx	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo
63	Luca Stolz (DEU) Brenton Grove (AUS) Stephen Grove (AUS)	Iron Lynx	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo
77	Ben Barker (GBR) Ben Tuck (GBR) Bernardo Sousa (PRT)	Proton Competition	Ford Mustang GT3
78	Jack Hawthorn (GBR) Finn Gehrsitz (DEU) Arnold Robin (FRA)	Akkodis ASP Team	Lexus RC F GT3
81	Charlie Eastwood (GBR) Rui Andrade (AGO) Tom van Rompuy (BEL)	TF Sport	Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R
85	Michelle Gatting (DNK) Rahel Frey (CHE) Celia Martin (FRA)	Iron Dames (Iron Lynx)	Porsche 911 GT3-R
87	Jose Maria Lopez (ARG) Clemens Schmid (AUT) Petru Umbrarescu (ROU)	Akkodis ASP Team	Lexus RC F GT3
88	Dennis Olsen (NOR) Giammarco Levorato (ITA) Stefano Gattuso (ITA)	Proton Competition	Ford Mustang GT3
90	Klaus Bachler (AUT) Loek Hartog (NLD) Antares Au (CHN)	Manthey	Porsche 911 GT3-R
92	Richard Lietz (AUT) Riccardo Pera (ITA) Ryan Hardwick (USA)	Manthey 1st Phorm	Porsche 911 GT3-R
95	Marino Sato (JPN) Sean Gelaef (IDN) Darren Leung (GBR)	United Autosports	McLaren 720S GT3 Evo
150	Riccardo Agostini (ITA) Lilou Wadoux (FRA) Custodio Toledo (BRA)	Richard Mille AF Corse	Ferrari 296 GT3
193	Eddie Cheever (ITA) Chris Froggatt (GBR) Jonathan Hui (CHN)	Ziggo Sport Tempesta	Ferrari 296 GT3

LE MANS 24 HOURS TIMETABLE

WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE

1400-1700

Free Practice 1

1845-1915

LMP2/LMGTS3 Qualifying

1930-2000

Hypercar Qualifying

2200-0000

Free Practice 2

THURSDAY 12 JUNE

1445-1745

Free Practice 3

2000-2020

LMP2/LMGTS3 Hyperpole 1

2035-2050

LMP2/LMGTS3 Hyperpole 2

2105-2125

Hypercar Hyperpole 1

2140-2155

Hypercar Hyperpole 2

2300-0000

Free Practice 4

SATURDAY 14 JUNE

1200-1215

Warm-up

1600

Start

SUNDAY 15 JUNE

1600

Finish

NOW
THAT
WAS
A
CAR

AUDI R8



The Audi R8's status as a relentless winning machine provokes conflicting views. But is it really possible for a racing car to be 'too good'?

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES MANN AND GETTY IMAGES



JAMES MANN

Few racing cars divide opinion like the Audi R8. Some regard the German manufacturer's LMP prototype as the all-time great to which its record attests. Others have labelled it a boring winning machine that did as much harm as good to international sportscar racing. The irony is that they are probably not contradictory opinions of a car that this season celebrates the 25th anniversary of the first of its five wins at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Audi's second stab at a prototype, developed for year two of what would end up being an 18-year adventure at the pinnacle of endurance racing, was perhaps "too good". Those are the words of Emanuele Pirro, a driver forever associated with the R8.

Good enough, certainly, to win 63 of the 80 races it contested from its debut in the 2000 edition of the Sebring 12 Hours to its farewell at Lime Rock in 2006. Both those races were rounds of the American Le Mans Series: the R8 would end up with a nice round 50 victories in what was at the time the world's premier sportscar championship. Add in those five Le Mans victories – five from six starts, it should be pointed out – and there can be no other conclusion that the R8 was too good for the opposition.

Which is why the record and legacy of the R8 will forever be questioned. That question is: who did it beat? It is undoubtedly true that the R8 did its winning at a time of downturn in endurance racing. In year one at Le Mans in 2000, the only overt manufacturer programme up against Audi and the factory Joest team was Cadillac with its Northstar project that was a day late and a dollar short in comparison with Audi.

Cadillac would step up its assault over the coming years, and MG and Bentley would arrive. That's not to forget Panoz, not an OEM but a worthy competitor good enough on occasion to beat Audi in the rough and tumble of the ALMS, if not at Le Mans. The R8 undoubtedly lacked the big rival on which the great sporting stories are founded, but was the level of opposition so different to that faced by Porsche when it pitched up with the 956 in the early 1980s? Not really.

The Audi draws comparison with the 956 and its long-wheelbase cousin, the 962, for its success and longevity. Yet early on the Group C design only faced Ford, Lancia and what was initially a motley collection of privateers. It flaunted its domination: 'Nobody's perfect' ran a press ad after the 956 took nine of the top 10 positions at Le Mans in 1983. Even so, the Porsche remains the more loved racing car.

Yet one of the reasons why Audi opted to go to Le Mans for the first time was the strength of the race. It was boom time in terms of manufacturer participation in 1999 when it arrived with a two-pronged attack with its first stab at an LMP, the R8R, and a closed-top LM-GTP, the R8C. BMW, Toyota, Mercedes and Nissan were all present at the Circuit de la Sarthe in what was a learning year for Audi. By the time it returned in a class now called LMP900 with a car that it thought could win, the GT-One, the V12 LMR et al were gone. The reasons for that were multifarious. >>



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“It wasn’t Audi’s fault that everyone else quit before the arrival of the R8,” states Wolfgang Ullrich, head of Audi Sport for all but the final years of the marque’s prototype engagement. “We aimed for Le Mans because it had all the manufacturers.”

Ullrich points out that you can only beat the opposition in front of you – and the race itself at Le Mans: “In the years when there were no manufacturer competitors, there were always privateer teams with good and reliable cars. It was never possible to just cruise around, and at the end of the day it is the victory that counts.”

There’s also an argument that the “too good” Audi R8 frightened off the opposition. There’s an element of truth to that. Cadillac’s programme was coming good in 2003 when it opted not to go beyond the initial three-year commitment. The reason it cited was that it could not compete against the new direct-injection FSI engine Audi introduced in 2001. It had no plans to employ that technology in its road cars, so it made no sense to spend the money to develop it for racing.

Whether you view the R8 with fondness or not, there is no doubt it was an excellent racing car. Just ask anyone who drove it, or was involved in running the machine. Pirro, the first driver to get behind the wheel at its roll-out at Vallelunga at the end of 1999, knew from the moment he took to the track that it was going to be something special.

“Very often when you drive a car for the first time you know straight away whether you have something very good in your hands,” he reckons. “That first test was very positive; I knew it was going to be a good car.”

The car was caught in action that day by a well-informed photographer up in the hills above the circuit with a long lens. Pirro spotted him and gave him a wave as he went

AUDI R8

NOW THAT WAS A CAR

about his shakedown duties. He would receive a photo from said snapper of his cheeky wave with a message. “Not a greeting, a rehearsal for victory,” it read. It was a prescient comment: Pirro would celebrate his victories in exuberant style, most notably completing an unprecedented hat-trick with team-mates Frank Biela and Tom Kristensen at Le Mans 2002. He was half out of the car, waving again, as he pootled around on the pitlane speed limiter on the slowing-down lap.

But the R8 wasn’t the perfect racing machine in year one. As good as it was when it notched up its first big victories, at Sebring and Le Mans, and went on to take the ALMS title with Allan McNish, there was still room for improvement. That came in year two with the introduction of the FSI version of the twin-turbo 3.6-litre V8, revised aerodynamics and a third spring set-up in the front suspension.

“The new engine played a big role in making the R8 even better,” recalls Pirro. “A large part of the driver-friendliness of a car comes from the power delivery. That was undoubtedly improved. We made quite a big step from year one to year two.”

The R8 was perhaps the ultimate user-friendly sportscar, easy to drive and run. “I never spun an R8, I’m sure I didn’t,” says Pirro. “I had incidents, fortunately not many, when I went off or had a collision, but I never actually spun the car. You never had to fight the R8: you braked, turned in and put the power down, and the corner was finished for you. The car was understeery, but not in a bad way. It had a very good rear end.”

McNish, part of the Audi line-up in 2000 before returning to its factory roster in 2004 following his Formula 1 sojourn, reckons the R8 could be tuned for >>



any circuit or any set of track conditions: “It didn’t matter if it was raining like hell at Silverstone or scorching hot at Le Mans, you could always make the car work. The 2000 car was a bit tricky to drive, but by the time I came back to the R8 in 2004 it was quick in every situation.”

JJ Lehto, a stalwart of Champion Racing’s campaigns in the ALMS and part of the team’s winning crew at Le Mans in 2005, revelled in driving the R8. “Every time you jumped in the car it was so much fun,” he recalls. “You knew you could drive it to the limit. Once you found the set-up, you could really trust the car and it never did anything surprising.”

Customer teams got their hands on the car as early as year two of the programme. The exploits of Champion, Veloqx, Team Goh and ORECA would cement the legacy of the R8 once Audi’s factory engagement came to an end after 2002. Audi strictly controlled its customers – and supported them with the loan of drivers and more. Jo Hausner, who had engineered Audi to its 2000-02 Le Mans hat-trick, was placed with Goh when it triumphed in France in 2004. An R8 came with a meaty operating manual and the teams were discouraged from diverging from the recommended set-up, let alone trying to develop the car themselves. “Inevitably we’d end up trying stuff,” remembers Chris Gorne, who engineered Johnny Herbert and Jamie Davies to the Le Mans Endurance Series LMP1 title with Veloqx in 2004. “But we’d usually come back to their settings, because they produced the lap times.”

Audi appeared to regard the team’s job as to bolt the car together, and then stick in the fuel and change the tyres. “You didn’t rebuild the uprights or put new rosejoints in,” continues Gorne. “A new corner would arrive fully assembled and you rarely took it apart. The whole system behind the R8 customer programme was fantastic.”

If the R8 swept all before it on the race track at Le Mans and beyond, its legacy stretches beyond its bulging CV. It set new benchmarks for both safety and serviceability in prototype racing. The key safety development was the introduction of a Formula 1-style surround for the driver in the ‘two-seater’ cockpit. It was subsequently made mandatory in the rules. The advances in safety made by

AUDI R8 NOW THAT WAS A CAR

Audi make it an irony that the last driver to die at the wheel of a top-class prototype was Michele Alboreto when he crashed at the Eurospeedway Lausitz in April 2001. Ullrich describes this as the low point of the R8 programme.

The serviceability or repairability of the R8 changed the face of endurance racing, and not just in the prototype arena. The change of a rear diffuser or whatever on a GT3 car in double-quick time at the Spa 24 Hours owes everything to the standard set by Audi’s LMP.

Ralf Juttner, managing director at Joest, tells a story about a conversation with Marino Franchitti after the 2002 Sears Point round of the ALMS. Audi had initially planned to skip the race only a month prior to Le Mans, but ended up borrowing the car used by Champion the previous year in order to gain valuable points, only for Pirro to crash as the result of a cut tyre late in the race.

“I remember speaking to Marino after the race,” says Juttner. “He was out in his Porsche GT car and saw our car in the barriers. The next lap around it was still there. The third time around, it was gone and he thought the marshals had done a good job. About 15 or 20 minutes later, Emanuele blew past him. After seeing the damage, he couldn’t believe that the car had been repaired. Emanuele had brought the car back on three wheels!”

Two years later at Le Mans, Lehto and McNish went off in unison on oil on the entry to the Porsche Curves at the end of the second hour. Both somehow made it back to the pits in heavily damaged machines. McNish was ruled out of the remainder of the race with concussion, but his mount was repaired. It would end up fifth, while the Champion car took home some silverware with third.

The modular nature of the R8 was born of necessity. During the first endurance tests of the R8R over the winter of 1998-99, its new Ricardo-built gearbox had proved troublesome. “There were quite some problems with the gearbox and we already understood how difficult it was to make the transmission reliable when we did our studies into the reasons why cars retired from Le Mans,” says Ullrich. “Out of that our group came up with the idea to change the complete rear end. I agreed, but I said, ‘Yes, if you can do it without losing a lap at Le Mans.’”

Ullrich reckons it could be done in under three and a half minutes, but there is no evidence of that being the case in competition. The record appears to be a sub-five-minute change at Le Mans in 1999.

The quick rear-end change was vital in getting the fourth-place R8R to the finish of Le Mans in 1999. It would undergo three changes of box over the 24 hours, even with a further development made shortly before the race: the introduction of a MEGA-Line paddleshift system. (The sister car in third would go through the race without a transmission change.)

This modular concept was developed further for the R8, and played an important role in many of its successes. When Audi completed a 1-2-3 finish on its debut in 2000, the second and third-place entries run by Joest had undergone rear-end changes. Damaged suspension resulting from a puncture rather than a transmission glitch precipitated the change on the third-placed car. >>



SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES

LE MANS WINS



2000



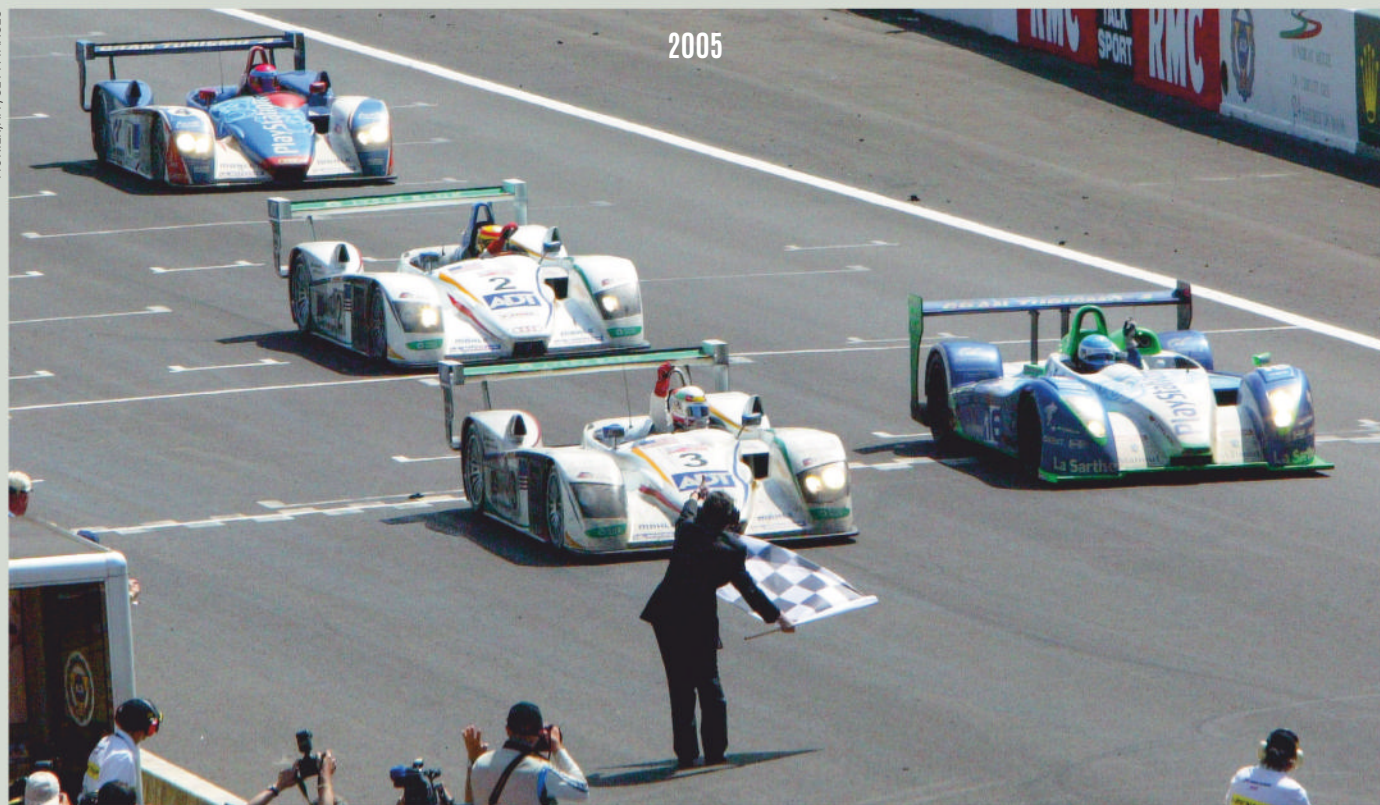
2001



2002



2004



2005

GETTY IMAGES

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Audi had opted for a conservative approach with its first prototype, which had a convoluted gestation at a time when it wasn't clear whether an open-top LMP or a GT1 car was the way to go. It eventually decided to hedge its bets with the development of the closed-top R8C in the UK to the new GTP rules that had replaced GT1. Pirro describes the R8R as "over-engineered".

"The most important thing was to complete the race because only by doing that do you gather data and gain experience," he explains. "This was the target for 1999." So it was mission accomplished for Audi with third and fourth with the R8R, even if the drivers were told by the press department that they were to say they were going to Le Mans to win.

Wolfgang Appel, technical director on both the R8R and R8 programmes, always joked that development of the latter started the Monday after Le Mans 1999. "No Tuesday, actually; we had a day off," he told this author. The reality is that Audi was already scheming its second LMP earlier.

"There was a small group working on ideas for the new car," reveals Ullrich. "Really it was a small group, but they were also working on the R8R – we had a lot of work to do for our first Le Mans. The real intense work started after the race."

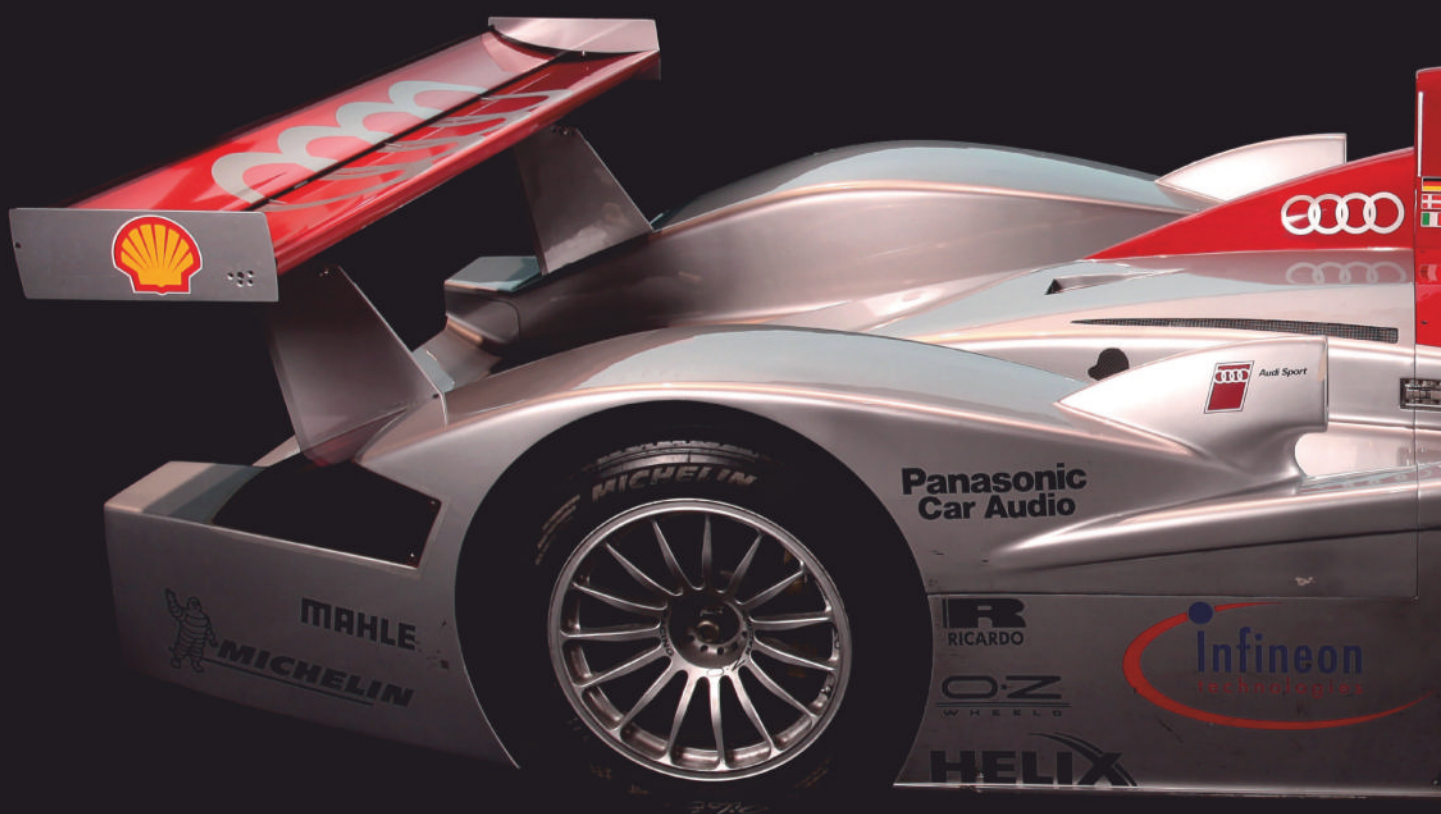
That makes it all the more remarkable that, love it or loathe it, one of the all-time great racing cars was up and running that December. And winning four months later. And that's something it never stopped doing. Winning! 🏆

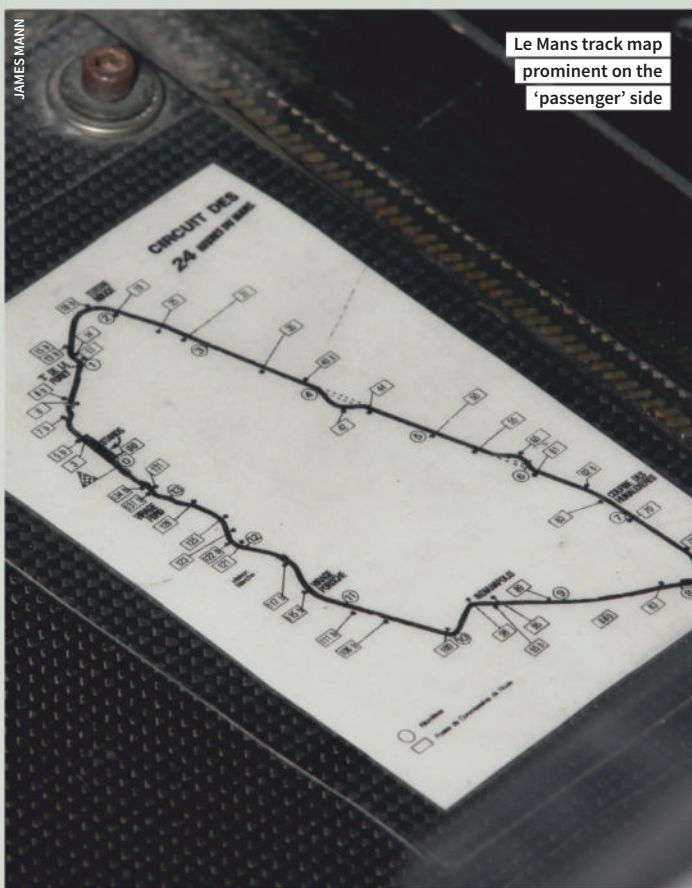
AUDI R8

NOW THAT WAS A CAR



JAMES MANN



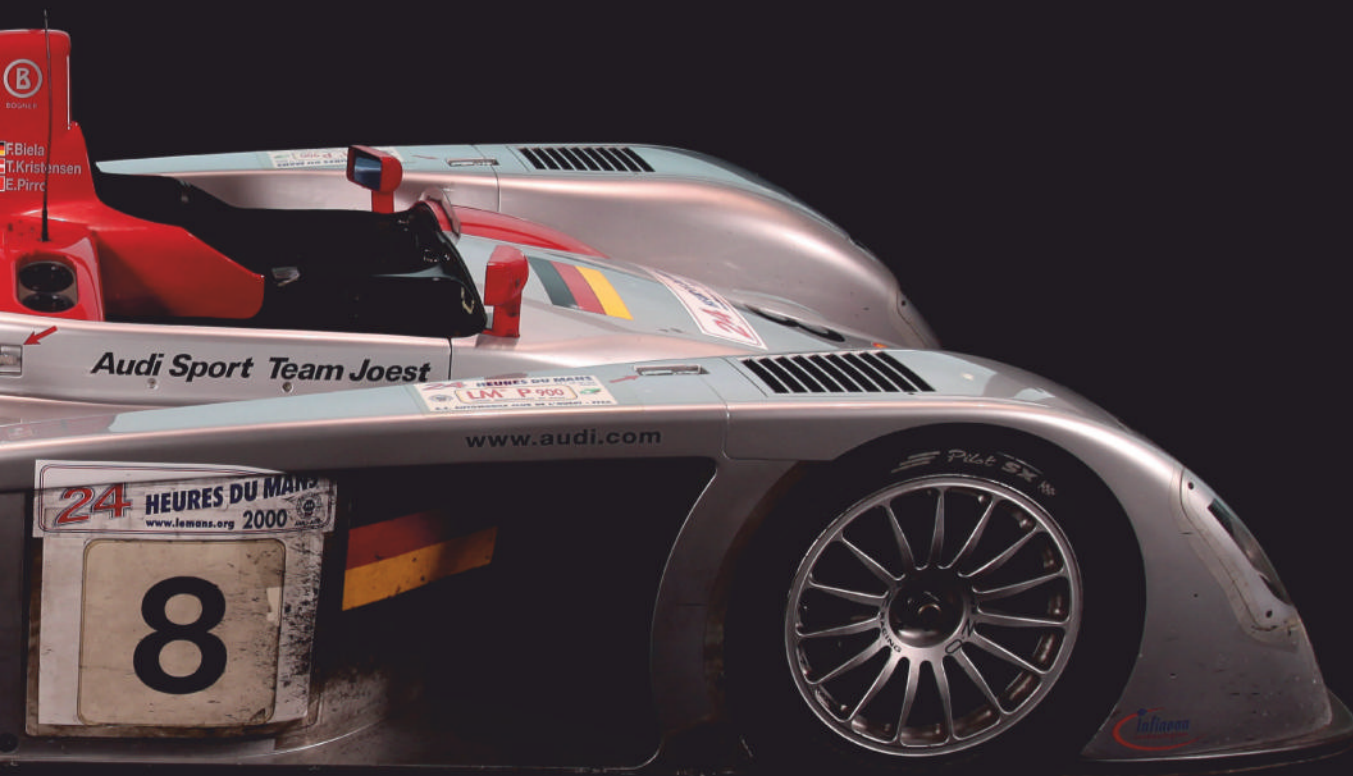


RACE RECORD

Starts	80
Wins	63
Pole positions	49
Podiums	136
Championships	American Le Mans Series 2000-05 European Le Mans Series 2001 Le Mans Endurance Series 2004

SPECIFICATION

Chassis	Carbon fibre composite monocoque
Suspension	Double wishbone pushrod
Engine	Twin-turbocharged V8
Engine capacity	3596cc
Power	520-610bhp
Gearbox	Ricardo six-speed semi-automatic
Brakes	Carbon discs
Tyres	Michelin
Weight	900-950kg
Notable drivers	Tom Kristensen, Allan McNish, Emanuele Pirro, Frank Biela, Johnny Herbert, JJ Lehto, Stefan Johansson, Michele Alboreto, Andy Wallace, Dindo Capello, Laurent Aiello



RALLYING





Flying Tanak is denied once more

Rally Portugal 2025 will be another one of those victories that slipped away from Ott Tanak in incredibly unfortunate circumstances. The 2019 world champion was the class of the field in Portugal, winning 12 of the 24 stages, and was seemingly on course to claim a 22nd career win until drama struck. For the third time in his career the Amarante stage came back to haunt the Estonian. It had previously derailed him in 2017 and 2021, and this time a power steering failure ended a likely first win of the year for Tanak and Hyundai. He proved he was the driver to beat by winning both passes through the famous Fafe stage (pictured) on Sunday to recover to second overall, 8.7 seconds behind winner Sebastien Ogier (see p121).

Photographer Colin McMaster/
McKlein

Where Fafe, Portugal

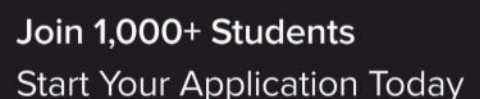
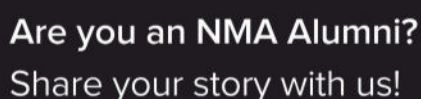
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Ogier's triumph lifts him into title fight top three

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

TANAK'S WOE IS OGIER'S JOY AT GRUELLING RALLY PORTUGAL

Sebastien Ogier came through a marathon Rally Portugal to claim a record-extending seventh World Rally Championship victory on the gravel event. Ogier and co-driver Vincent Landais navigated a particularly demanding schedule that tested crews and teams to the limit to win the 24-stage contest as Toyota continued its 100% winning start to 2025.

The eight-time world champion took a 63rd career victory by 8.7 seconds from long-time leader Ott

Tanak, with two-time title winner Kalle Rovanpera completing the podium just 12.2s adrift.

Hyundai bounced back from its Rally Islas Canarias struggles to enjoy a 1-2 through most of Friday. Tanak and team-mate Adrien Fourmaux were locked in battle for the lead as the pair shared the fastest times through the first four stages on Friday. Tanak held a 0.2s margin over Fourmaux at the first remote service before extending it by a further 0.6s across the next two stages.

Fourmaux's challenge came to an abrupt stop on stage eight when his i20 N suffered a front-left suspension failure. He rejoined the rally on Saturday but retired again on Sunday with an overheating engine.

Tanak continued his strong pace to end a brutal 10-stage Friday by extending his lead to 7s over Ogier, who hauled himself into second

following a strong afternoon run. Takamoto Katsuta was third, 1.2s ahead of Toyota team-mate Rovanpera, who struggled for speed on Hankook's gravel tyres.

Ogier continued to charge on Saturday, closing to within 2s of Tanak, who was hampered by a puncture. An inspired set-up tweak helped Tanak deliver a stunning time on stage 14, 9.8s quicker than Ogier, to extend his lead.

At this point the 2019 champion appeared to be in control as consecutive stage wins pushed the advantage to 13.9s. But his hopes of a first win of the season were dashed by a sudden power steering failure, caused by a broken steering rack midway through stage 17. Tanak was forced to wrestle the car to service but dropped to third, half a minute down on new leader Ogier.

Ogier held a 27.6s gap over second-placed Rovanpera entering Sunday's final six stages, opting

ROUND 5/14
RALLY PORTUGAL RESULTS

- 1 Sebastien Ogier/
Vincent Landais**
Toyota GR Yaris Rally1
(Toyota Gazoo Racing)
3h48m35.9s
- 2 Ott Tanak/
Martin Jarveoja**
Hyundai i20 N Rally1
(Hyundai Motorsport)
+8.7s
- 3 Kalle Rovanpera/
Jonne Halttunen**
Toyota GR Yaris Rally1
(Toyota Gazoo Racing)
+12.2s

POINTS 1 Elfyn Evans 118;
2 Rovanpera 88; 3 Ogier 86.

not to take any risks in the first of them. Rovanpera subsequently took 11.1s out of Ogier on stage 19 to apply pressure on the leader, but the charge was short-lived.

Tanak produced a stirring fightback on Sunday to overhaul the Finn and claim second, topping the Super Sunday and Power Stage standings to bag an extra 10 points.

"It was a tough fight with Ott, unfortunately not fair to the end with his problem otherwise we would not have won, because he was obviously quicker," admitted Ogier, who moved to third in the championship standings. "But it's not always about being quick in rallying, you also have to bring it home and that's what we did."

Tanak's reigning world champion team-mate Thierry Neuville came home in fourth, 38.5s behind Ogier, after a difficult rally spent fighting the balance of his Hyundai. After running as high as second, Katsuta dropped to fifth at the finish.

Elfyn Evans snatched sixth from Sami Pajari and saw his points lead over Rovanpera drop from 43 to 30 after a difficult rally that was initially hindered by opening the road.

The top 10 was completed by impressive M-Sport Ford rookie Josh McErlean, Gregoire Munster and WRC2 winner Oliver Solberg.

TOM HOWARD



Seven wins for Ogier on Portuguese gravel

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INSIDER

When does an endurance test push things too far? Tom Howard ponders

May's Rally Portugal brought a topic to the surface that's been bubbling away among World Rally Championship drivers and teams for some time – rally itineraries. The sport's DNA has always been about endurance and we all love to see the best in the world tested to their limits. But the majority of the service park agreed that Rally Portugal's extreme schedule pushed the endurance line a bit too far.

It put a dampener on a rally that's one of the best on the calendar. Let's remember, it's not easy to put on a WRC event. It requires around €5million of funding, an extraordinary number of volunteers, and a huge amount of coordination with authorities to make sure the rally runs like clockwork and is safe for those competing and spectating. Portugal receives a huge tick in the box for that.

Likewise, the passion for rallying in Portugal is on a different level, evidenced by more than 500,000 turning out to watch the world's best drivers tackle famous gravel stages such as Arganil and Fafe.

But the addition of two extra stages on Friday created a knock-on effect that left drivers and crews all agreeing it was too much. The FIA has explained that adding a longer Friday leg was a key factor in delivering the funding for this year's event. As a result, crews tackled 10 stages on Friday, beginning with a first test at 7.35am before eventually returning to the Porto service park at 9pm. Across the day, drivers and co-drivers spent 14 hours in their cars, covering a total distance of 424 miles, of which 91 miles were competitive stages. The day was only punctuated by two 20-minute remote services and two short regroup, restricting drivers on time to eat and rest.

The action resumed on Saturday with the first car checking out of the service park at 6am, ahead of another 13-hour day. Sunday featured six stages, instead of the four last year, with crews starting the first test at 6.43am.

Drivers welcome long days in the championship that add

to the challenge of events. But the short Friday night to recover and analyse onboard videos to prepare for Saturday's action, and the cumulative effect of the three days combined, left many questioning the format.

Two-time world champion Kalle Rovanpera claimed the schedule posed a safety risk given the crews' lack of sleep. When for large parts of the day they're driving on public roads, it's a fair point. Even eight-time world champion and event winner Sebastien Ogier admitted it was among the most physically demanding rallies he's taken part in. Complaints from drivers regarding the lack of time to eat and drink during the day is a concern, especially when they are spending upwards of 15 hours in cars in hot temperatures – longer stints than any driver is expected to complete at the Le Mans 24 Hours, for example.

Interestingly, the itinerary could have been even more extreme, but the FIA rejected a longer route proposal from the rally organisers. It's also pertinent to add that two weeks prior to the rally, the matter of working hours and pressure for those employed within the WRC was discussed during the latest WRC Commission. It was agreed that a set of guidelines would be produced "for event organisers to better advise and inform on improving practices when creating itineraries and the schedule of rally week". The target is for these guidelines to be in place from next year.

The WRC Promoter acknowledged this when admitting that Portugal's itinerary "likely hit some limits for the length of consecutive days that can be sustained".

You could see throughout the event the impact the long days were having on the drivers. There is an argument that this is why they are paid multi-million-pound salaries and they should get on with it, and their predecessors had to deal with far more punishing schedules. But times have changed, and in the past drivers had more time between stages and more services to recover and replenish energy.

"Complaints from drivers over the lack of time to eat and drink during the day is a concern"

It must also be said that the current crop of drivers have much heavier workloads outside of driving. The preparation for a modern rally is, frankly, extraordinary. Co-drivers are preparing for rallies sometimes multiple weeks in advance. Then there's the matter of onboard video analysis, something that has increased the workload for crews striving to get an edge. It is very difficult to put the genie back in the bottle on that one, with rallies won by such fine margins that this focus on stage analysis during events is essential and cannot be policed now.

Nobody wants to see the element of endurance disappear from the WRC, but surely there are measures to improve the welfare of those competing without detracting from the spectacle. 🏆



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ELFYN EVANS

FIA

33

BRITAIN'S NEXT WORLD RALLY CHAMPION?

He's been second four times. Now Elfyn Evans leads the 2025 standings after a fine start to the season with Toyota

TOM HOWARD

In sport, there will always be a pursuit of perfection. In motorsport, perfect seasons are unheard of but, more often than not, those who come the closest to it ultimately win championships. It is fair to say that Elfyn Evans is one of those drivers who strives for perfection. The Welshman is known for a meticulous, no-stone-unturned approach and often pours hour upon hour into analysing onboard videos in search of the edge to achieve the ultimate dream – becoming World Rally champion.

After three rounds of the 2025 season, Evans had come close to perfection, finishing second in Monte Carlo before back-to-back wins in Sweden and Safari Rally Kenya. The results racked up 88 points from a maximum 105, equating to a championship lead of 36 points. Now the season heads towards its sixth round in Sardinia with the Toyota driver holding a 30-point lead over team-mate Kalle Rovanpera. It is of course very early days when it comes to title talk, but the numbers look promising with a points tally 21 better than his previous best at this point in the season, after just five of the 14 rounds.

"If I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it properly and that's it," declares Evans.

"It's a pain in the arse," he smiles, when asked about the constant striving for perfection through preparation. "I definitely think I'm going to pay the price for that at some point in terms of the longevity of my career. You only get one shot at it is the way I go."

It's this hard graft combined with natural talent that has led to Evans becoming one of the WRC's elite drivers. After honing his WRC craft at M-Sport Ford from 2013-19 in a spell that had its fair share of ups and downs, including a season where he dropped back to WRC2 in 2016, Evans joined Toyota for 2020. He's subsequently transformed into a title contender.

In the COVID-19-affected 2020 and 2021 campaigns, Evans knocked on the championship door, only to be denied by one of rallying's greatest: team-mate Sebastien Ogier. In both seasons Evans took the fight down to the wire, with 2020 the most agonising when an off in the snow at Rally Monza handed Ogier the crown.

Evans took a while to adjust to the move to hybrid, but in 2023 and last season he was again the runner-up, respectively to another Toyota team-mate in the form of Kalle Rovanpera and Hyundai man Thierry Neuville. Evans ended 2024 as the driver in form, with two second place finishes and a win in the Japan season finale.

So it should be no shock that Evans is in the title hunt this year, although the manner in which he has come out

"It is a pain in the arse," he smiles when asked about his constant striving for perfection"

of the blocks has caught many by surprise. Has anything changed for Evans that has enabled him to enjoy this career-best start to a season?

"I have been through a lot of ups and downs, and it can go down again," he reckons. "Naturally things will develop and progress, but I don't feel that different. Maybe the expectation is now a lot higher than what I had of myself in 2020. You always want to keep on improving. I'm not young anymore so sometimes it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks.

"We started this year moving in the right direction. There has been no real big change – maybe the types of events have suited us. Obviously the more difficult events [last year] were the gravel ones. That is still a ➤

work in progress, let's say. I'm not really surprised [by the start to the year]. We have had no bad luck or things not go our way, which is normally part of the game. It's bound to hit us at some point.

"There is definitely a lot more excitement about it, but I'm realistic about how things can play out over the next seven or eight rallies. It's a nice cushion but it's still very, very early days."

Toyota team principal Jari-Matti Latvala felt there was too much pressure on Evans to deliver as one of only two full-time drivers last year, although the Gwynedd man doesn't subscribe to that theory. From the outside it appears he is more relaxed this year and there is definitely a steely determination to win. This was evident in Sweden, where he lost the lead on Sunday morning to team-mate Takamoto Katsuta before storming back to take the victory.

There have also been changes to the regulations this year, with hybrid power removed from the Rally1 cars, which now operate on a new control tyre provided by Hankook. That rubber has certainly provided a challenge for Roanpera, and it appears that these changes have contributed to Evans's fast start to 2025.

"Sometimes it just naturally falls in your favour, which it has done in a few of the rallies at the start of the year," explains Evans. "But the tyres have shifted towards my style, at least for the specific events we had at the start of the year. Losing the hybrid power is not a huge factor. Obviously there are subtle changes that were already making gains in terms of the overall balance of the car, and maybe just taking the hybrid has further improved that side of things. But there has been no real clear step to make me say that this feels way better."

This is Evans's view, but what do those who work closely with him believe? Since Evans joined Toyota he has been paired with experienced Portuguese engineer Rui Soares, who previously looked after Hayden Paddon and Kris Meeke. According to Evans, Soares is a "proper bobbie hatter", but more importantly the relationship that has

"He is one of the cleverest drivers and also a very good mechanic so you can't bullshit him"

formed over the past five years is a strong one. "It works well, we understand each other and I think he knows what I want from the car," smiles Evans.

That feeling is clearly mutual when sitting down with Soares at Rally Portugal to understand what makes Evans tick as a rally driver. "It made me very happy to work with Elfyn when he joined the team because I was big fan of his dad [1996 British rally champion Gwyndaf Evans, who is part of Evans's route note crew]," recalls Soares. "I still remember the first test we did in Monte Carlo in 2020 with Elfyn. I remember looking at his times and thinking, 'This is fast.' I thought, 'Wow, we are onto something big here.'"

"In the beginning he was a very shy guy and very difficult to read, and it was very difficult to understand

EVANS AT TOYOTA

Year	Wins	Position (Points)
2020	2	2nd (114)
2021	2	2nd (207)
2022	0	4th (134)
2023	3	2nd (216)
2024	1	2nd (210)
2025	2	1st (118)*

*After five of 14 rounds

if he was happy or unhappy, but over the years it has become easier. For sure, he understands how to work best with the team and to push the team in a direct way.

"He is probably one of the cleverest drivers you will ever come across. He's also a very good mechanic so you can't bullshit him. He's not the most positive to himself and sometimes he's the most self-critical person I know. Elfyn is someone that gauges himself against the clock and that's why sometimes he could be beating everybody and still want more. He always jokes and says I see the glass half full and he is totally the opposite."

Focusing on the 'Evans 2.0' of 2025, Soares admits that the changes to the tyres and the removal of hybrid have played in Evans's favour to some degree: "You take out the hybrid and there are things which change on the car that suit better his driving for sure. The way he was using the hybrid was the correct way, but the car with the hybrid was maybe not ideal for him. It is more that he has adapted to the tyres quicker than others, and the hybrid has less influence, but it's the whole package."

"Car-wise it was not always easy to get the things he wanted and sometimes it's very frustrating for us because we can see where the struggles are. When we came to Central Europe last year things started to click and then it's a snowball effect. If he goes better he starts to be more relaxed and then if you are more relaxed you start to take the best from yourself without realising it. Maybe he is more relaxed than we have seen him in a long time, which definitely is a good thing."

"As you grow up you start to see fewer issues. If you asked me four years ago, maybe we were too focused on an issue and would dedicate too much time to it. Now, before we do a change, we try to understand if there is something we can do on the driving style before trying to adapt the car. This is something that has come with maturity in this relationship."

Evans is in one of the strongest positions to achieve rallying's greatest prize, but he isn't getting carried away. A run to sixth in Portugal last month proved a bump in the road as old struggles on rough gravel came to the surface, now amplified by the disadvantage of starting first on the road. The next few rallies will provide the ultimate litmus test for Evans's title tilt. ❄

Elfyn Evans



Evans showed his mettle storming back to win in Sweden

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TGR WRT/MCKLEIN

Fine mechanic Evans is also meticulous in preparing for events



Engineer Soares is 'glass half full' to Evans's 'half empty'

TGR WRT/MCKLEIN



Evans survived car-breaking conditions to take Safari triumph

TGR WRT/MCKLEIN

TOURING CARS





BTCC in Kent countryside

Jake Hill leads through Druids as the British Touring Car Championship kicks off its second round at Brands Hatch. Jakob Ebrey, the doyen of photography for the series (and many others), has a crew of several snappers for each BTCC weekend. We had visions of one of his team dangling from a crane for this one, but no... It was taken with the use of a drone. "With the GP circuit not in use we had the amazing opportunity to capture the Indy Circuit from the air – a view we'd planned out in advance and turned out even better than we could imagine," says Ebrey.

Photographer Ryan Ellis/JEP

Where Brands Hatch, Kent, UK
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BTCC

WSR BMWs ON TOP AT BRANDS IN REAR-DRIVE 'PERFECT STORM'

The phrase 'perfect storm' was being bandied around among the British Touring Car Championship cognoscenti in the aftermath of round two at Brands Hatch. Where had the pace of West Surrey Racing's BMWs come from? They had been significantly lacking in the opener at Donington Park, yet here were reigning champion Jake Hill, teenaged talent Daryl DeLeon and star rookie Charles Rainford taking a win apiece aboard their respective 3 Series weapons. And two of those victories were 1-2s.

A rear-wheel-drive car struggling with ballast placement for weight distribution following the removal of 55kg of hybrid for 2025? Pah!

But, in reality, that perfect storm was very real. The Brands Indy circuit has always been a happy hunting ground for the 330i M Sport, and the brand-new resurfacing of Surtees and Clearways, while it increased grip significantly for everybody onto the all-important Brabham Straight, especially played into the hands of the rear-driven cars. This was magnified by ambient temperatures in the twenties, and the blacker surface of the newly laid asphalt soaking in the heat – to the detriment of the front-wheel-drive cars, which had to make the soft-compound Goodyear tyres last for 24 laps at a time. Techy number-crunchers discovered that the BMWs were gaining 0.15 to 0.25 seconds over their opposition on traction out of Clearways, with

the Ford Focus STs the most disadvantaged here.

And then there was the TOCA Turbo Boost allocation. Of the BMW drivers, Hill's pre-weekend sixth place in the points entitled him to 11 seconds per lap in qualifying, with Aiden Moffat (seventh) on 13s, and DeLeon and Rainford on the maximum 15s apiece. Over the shortest track on the calendar, with records smashed down into the 46s, this is a significant benefit. Especially when championship leader Ash Sutton had a mere 1s for his Alliance Racing-run NAPA Ford Focus ST, and Ingram 3s for his Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N.

But we must also factor in the development work carried out at WSR in shifting that ballast. The BMWs had made a big step forward since Donington thanks to the engineers' brainpower, plus some extreme experimentation during the

pre-Brands shakedown at the MIRA proving ground. It appears that the 3 Series is ultra-sensitive to any shifts in weight, and the toil continued beyond free practice, with Hill's 'Laser Beemer' only just making it onto the apron in front of its garage in the nick of time to avoid being barred from taking part in qualifying.

Here, Hill set the overall fastest time in Q1, before Rainford jumped to the top in Q2. In the final shootout, Hill pipped Rainford to pole position in a 1-2 for WSR and for local boys – their respective dads had been highly amused to find out that their pair of BMW-and-Capri-loving offspring were both born in the same Tunbridge Wells maternity ward...

Ominously, Ingram was fourth, just 0.2s adrift of pole. And that was despite locking his Hyundai





Ingram and Hill in epic finale battle

out of any TTB at all thanks to a too-enthusiastic attempt to deploy it when he hadn't yet reached the prescribed minimum speed of 135km/h. "The team have worked tirelessly," acknowledged Hill. "Don't get me wrong – genuinely we're halfway there. I know that we're on pole and that's great, but you have to look at the likes of Tom who is P4 and only a couple of tenths away with zero boost. We've still got pace to find, that's for sure."

Ingram's TTB handicap carried over into race one, although he leapfrogged the sister Excelr8 Hyundai of Adam Morgan on the opening lap to chase Hill and Rainford, falling away slightly as the BMWs' pace on the soft tyres kept up better than that of their front-wheel-drive rivals.

With the top three compelled by the rules to use the hard rubber in race two, this looked like an opportunity for Morgan and fifth-placed Dan Cammish. But the BMWs' pace held up remarkably well on the red-sidewalled tyres too, both Hill and Rainford lapping over 0.3s faster than anyone else had to date on this compound. Even so, Cammish's Alliance Ford was shadowing Hill when a safety car interruption brought the field together again, the Yorkshireman relating afterwards that he'd just been working out when to use his TTB for his inevitable sail-past to victory. He never got there... The Focus ground to a halt just after the safety car lights went off, a distraught and self-flagellatory Cammish surprised at the late call and accidentally switching off his ignition instead of the engine cooling fan. He was then hit by the unsighted Mikey Doble and Moffat,

destroying the left-rear suspension.

DeLeon was promoted to second on the soft tyres, and instantly passed Hill for the lead. A fraught fight for second between Rainford and Hill allowed the Irish-born Anglo-Filipino to cruise home. While Rainford and Hill eventually fell to seventh and eighth, Morgan fought up to second. And Sutton, who had got the hard tyre out of the way in race one, won his battle with a tenacious Chris Smiley in Restart Racing's Hyundai for third.

Rainford got the better of reversed-grid poleman Dan Rowbottom and Hill early in the finale, but had the blue BMW looming large in his mirrors before Hill lost time avoiding Max Hall, who was pitlane-bound in his Cupra. That brought Ingram, up from 11th on the grid, right onto Hill's tail – and with a surplus of TTB. Somehow Hill held on in as fine an example of hard-but-just-about-fair tin-top racing as you will see.

Sutton, after another fight with Smiley, held onto his series lead with fourth place. "We'll go away and obviously have a little rethink of how we go about setting the car up or just try and experiment with a few things," offered the four-time champion. "We're not a million miles away. The car felt mega in the last race if I'm honest."

But Sutton left Kent with just five points' advantage over Ingram. The 2022 champion was yet to win a race in 2025, but, he smiled with the satisfaction of a job well done: "The car's felt phenomenal all weekend. A lovely place to be, and sets the tone for the rest of the year I hope..."

MARCUS SIMMONS



DeLeon gets plaudits from Sutton for win...



...while Rainford gets a champagne shower

RESULTS ROUND 2/10

RACE 1

- Jake Hill**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
24 laps in 19m18.842s
- Charles Rainford**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+0.662s
- Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+2.514s
- Adam Morgan**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+2.943s
- Dan Cammish**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+8.114s

RACE 2

- Daryl DeLeon**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
27 laps in 26m43.327s
- Adam Morgan**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+3.641s
- Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+5.466s
- Chris Smiley**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Restart Racing)
+5.910s
- Aiden Moffat**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+6.798s

RACE 3

- Charles Rainford**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
24 laps in 19m18.227s
- Jake Hill**
BMW 330i M Sport
(West Surrey Racing)
+1.983s
- Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+2.374s
- Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+7.518s
- Chris Smiley**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Restart Racing)
+9.194s

POINTS 1 Sutton 92; 2 Ingram 87; 3 Hill 80.



Rowbottom harried by Hyundais
on his way to the flag in race two



BTCC

SPORTING REGS KEEP THE LEAD SCORERS IN CHECK

It's becoming clear that the British Touring Car Championship in its 2025 incarnation is proving to be more about points accumulation than race wins. Ash Sutton, shooting for a record-breaking fifth title, stretched his advantage over Tom Ingram from five points to 15 at Snetterton, despite not winning a race – although he came close to one in the day's finale. And that is because his setback over the weekend was less injurious.

When the Alliance Racing Ford Focus ST, again carrying its celebratory 100th anniversary livery for title sponsor NAPA, ground to a halt on track for the third time on Saturday, at least Sutton had made it through to the Quick Six shootout. That meant a guaranteed starting position of sixth. It could have been a lot worse. He had returned to the pits on the end of a towrope after free practice, and again the electrical problem struck in Q2, although Sutton managed a reset to get going again and comfortably progress. This time, in Q3, it was terminal. "Just one of those horrible little gremlins that made an appearance," he summed up.

When Ingram's Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N Fastback looped into a spin at the ultra-fast

Riches on the third lap of race two, this was much more damaging. After finishing second in the opener, successfully defending a late attacking salvo from Sutton, he and his big rival were forced onto the hard tyres for the sequel. Sutton would eventually sink to 10th on this rubber, and reckoned he would have kept ahead of Ingram, so let's predict at least a top 12 for the Hyundai. As it was, the spin speared Ingram back across the track and into a rear toelink-damaging impact with the inside barrier. That meant a starting position of 24th for the final race, versus Sutton 14 places ahead.

As the only trio on the hard tyres in race two – and forced into using them by the sporting regulations – Sutton, Ingram and first-race victor Dan Cammish were doomed against the soft-shod hordes. This was the second of four rounds this year where the choice is between soft Goodyears and hards, and the performance delta between the two compounds is turning race days into a game of strategy.

Cammish, delighted after his Brands Hatch gaffe to reward the Alliance team by planting his Focus on pole, and then even more delighted to convert that into a victory after carefully

managing his surfeit of TOCA Turbo Boost allocation to keep Ingram and Sutton at bay, mused at the end of the day: "There's some interesting things going on in this championship. I couldn't believe when the whole grid [outside the top three] was on softs in race two that we're in a situation now where I'm not sure if you want to be on the podium in race one. We'll go away and really think about that strategy, because I was on pole, we've been fast all weekend, and I've scored less points than some people who have maybe not had the outright pace that we've had because of how the system works. This tyre offset of hards and softs, I'm not sure if it's helping anyone."

Well, says a third member of the Alliance Ford squad in the form of Dan Rowbottom, "hold my beer"... To be fair, the bearded Midlander was in a happy place at Snetterton, work with veteran engineer Paul Ridgway to steer the Focus towards a set-up that suited him paying off with third on the grid. 'Rowbo' then finished fourth in the opener, putting him in prime position with another set of soft tyres in race two.

Rowbottom did take victory, but those Hyundais are damn fast and he had two of them –

Doble played canny tactical game to deliver race-three victory



Dan Lloyd of Restart Racing and Adam Morgan of Excelr8 – to deal with before he got to the chequered flag. Lloyd's mid-race attack, in which he got ahead of Rowbottom to lead for a few corners, was an interesting illustration of TTB racecraft. Rowbottom used his, leaving him a lap short later on, to get back ahead; Lloyd didn't use his to defend. The amiable Yorkshireman, back in the BTCC after a year out in 2024, admitted to "a little bit of rust from myself in those situations".

Morgan came through to second ahead of yet another Hyundai – the Excelr8 machine of Tom Chilton – but their time spent getting past Lloyd meant that Rowbottom could afford a lap without TTB and still have just enough in hand at the end to pip the rejuvenated Morgan.

But... they all, along with Lloyd's fifth-placed team-mate Chris Smiley, had a set of the dreaded hard tyres lurking in the shadows for use in race three. Sixth-placed Mikey Doble, drawn on reversed-grid pole, had been a force all weekend and had softs. The Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra has been quick all season and, after qualifying fourth, Doble had raised eyebrows when he went to the grid for race one on hard tyres (see page 137).

This proved a tactical masterstroke. Doble held on for ninth in that race, improved to sixth

in the follow-up – despite a wild, high-speed, bouncing trip across the grass at the esses – and then used his tyre advantage to pull out a handy gap early on in the finale.

A safety car interlude pegged the Vauxhall back, after which Sutton quickly progressed to second. Now the pressure was on, but Doble – despite a TTB deficit to the championship leader – drove a beautiful race to hang on. "Everyone raised question marks over our choice of hard tyre in race one, and it was all for that moment there," he grinned. "I played the long game."

Sutton running wide at the hairpin on the penultimate lap – his front tyres were gone – effectively locked in Doble's win, while Ingram stormed up to fourth, albeit far behind the One Motorsport Honda Civic Type R of Josh Cook.

And, in a West Surrey Racing BMW nightmare, reigning champion Jake Hill took a best weekend result of... ninth. "It's tricky because I feel we're really on top of the chassis," he bemoaned. "We are beyond empty in a straight line – I've never had such a deficit in all of my touring car career." But at least while he was struggling, Sutton and Ingram weren't scoring ridiculous amounts of points. And that's all thanks to those sporting regulations.

MARCUS SIMMONS

RESULTS ROUND 3/10

RACE 1

- Dan Cammish**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
12 laps in 23m13.916s
- Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+4.307s
- Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+4.689s
- Dan Rowbottom**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+8.137s
- Dan Lloyd**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Restart Racing)
+8.608s

RACE 2

- Dan Rowbottom**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
12 laps in 23m29.619s
- Adam Morgan**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+0.355s
- Tom Chilton**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+2.276s
- Dan Lloyd**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Restart Racing)
+3.013s
- Chris Smiley**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Restart Racing)
+3.172s

RACE 3

- Mikey Doble**
Vauxhall Astra
(Power Maxed Racing)
15 laps in 32m04.228s
- Ash Sutton**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+0.770s
- Josh Cook**
Honda Civic Type R
(One Motorsport)
+2.881s
- Tom Ingram**
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
(Excelr8 Motorsport)
+8.595s
- Sam Osborne**
Ford Focus ST
(Alliance Racing)
+9.040s

POINTS 1 Sutton 132; 2 Ingram 117; 3 Jake Hill 92.

Cammish delighted to win race one from pole





Guerrieri leads the
Lynk & Co battalion

TCR WORLD TOUR

HONDA LEADS THE WAY TO FOIL LYNK & CO HORDES

The 20th anniversary season of the birth of the FIA's global touring car championship began at Mexico City's Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, with privateer Honda driver Esteban Guerrieri winning two of the three TCR World Tour races to lead the manufacturer efforts of Lynk & Co and Hyundai at the top of the points table.

The Argentinian put his GOAT Racing Civic on pole, but was caught out by a fast-changing set of lights that played against the complex starting procedure of the Honda, and it was the Lynk & Co of Santiago Urrutia that led away.

Urrutia was quickly chased down by team-mate Yann Ehrlacher, who had more pace than his Cyan Racing team-mates throughout the weekend. After a close battle, an impatient dive at Turn 1 with seven laps to go

meant the Frenchman put all four wheels off the track. This would bite him back when he was given a post-race penalty that dropped him to third, with Thed Bjork promoted to victory and Urrutia to the runner-up spot.

Guerrieri recovered to fourth, and made a rocket start from the reversed grid to lead race two. Guerrieri, who British F3 fans will remember for his exploits in an Ultimate Motorsport Mygale in 2008, was chased down at the end by Ehrlacher, but held on to the win by 0.1 seconds despite a delaminating front tyre.

Guerrieri controlled the final race, in which Ehrlacher suffered a power issue at the start before finishing a distant 16th. Bjork and Urrutia joined the Honda man on the podium.

Hyundai had a weekend to forget, with all the Elantras struggling for pace, reportedly due to the 2km altitude of the circuit not suiting the smaller turbo-engined cars. Tenth for Mikel Azcona in race one was the best result for the team.

Ex-Champ Car race winner Michel Jourdain Jr was part of the guesting TCR Mexico hordes in a Cupra, taking a best of seventh.

NEIL HUDSON



Struggle for Hyundai and
reigning champ Michelisz

BTCC

PROCTOR TO MAKE EARLY RETURN WITH EXCELR8

While Tom Ingram, Adam Morgan and Tom Chilton were all taking British Touring Car Championship podium finishes over the Snetterton weekend, it was the fourth Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai that was the subject of much conjecture over the course of the Norfolk event.

Michael Crees, the 2020 Jack Sears Trophy title winner, was behind the wheel for the opening two rounds on his latest return to the BTCC. But he relinquished the seat for Snetterton to Ryan Bensley, a TCR UK competitor who is a backer of Crees through his Mortgage Synergy company.

The inference was that this was to be a one-off for Bensley, with Crees intending to return for the next rounds at Thruxton and Oulton Park before Senna Proctor, as already announced, fills the seat for the second half of the season.

But that was without counting on BTCC rules. Under the terms of the TBL entrants' licences, only two driver changes can be made for one entry during the

course of a season. And according to series supremo Alan Gow, driver budgets and financial reasons do not count as *force majeure* in this scenario.

That left Excelr8 with three options: Bensley's one-off became a three-off; Crees returned to fill the seat for the remainder of the season; or the Proctor deal was brought forward to cover seven rounds rather than the intended five.

It appears that the decision has been taken for it to be Proctor, meaning an early return for the lofty Yorkshireman, who last raced in the series in 2021. That year, he got a late call-up to partner Josh Cook at the BTC Racing (now One Motorsport) Honda squad after the team had parted company on the eve of the season with... Michael Crees.

Proctor proved highly impressive in that campaign, scoring a race win at Oulton Park and five further podiums, although his racing activities since then have largely been confined to the family's roots in autograss.

MARCUS SIMMONS





AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

NO PAYNE, NO GAIN FOR FEENEY, AS TOYOTA SNAPS UP NEW TEAM FOR ENTRY

Only a brave strategy and smart, tyre-preserving driving from Matt Payne stopped Broc Feeney from sweeping the Symmons Plains Supercars round.

Feeney looked to be the in-form driver and his Triple Eight Chevrolet took the two opening races at the Tasmania bullring, but Payne braved it out in Sunday's longer race, nursing the tyres on his Grove Racing Ford to beat Feeney home by about a metre. As a result, and with 5-11-3 results

by team-mate Will Brown, Feeney now leads the points for the first time.

It was a tough weekend for Chaz Mostert, who is now fifth and 250 points behind Feeney. But shortly after the weekend Mostert confirmed that, despite reported interest from General Motors, he would remain with Walkinshaw Andretti United next year.

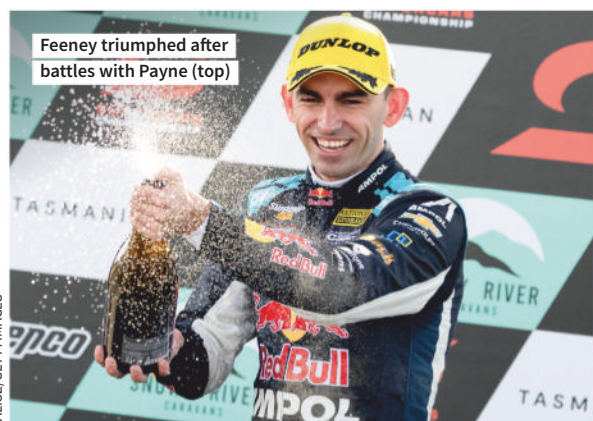
The other big news of the weekend was confirmation of Toyota's second team for 2026. As expected, Brad Jones

Racing will join homologation team WAU to represent the Japanese marque, meaning that there will be six GR Supra V8s on the grid from next season. Unless there are any unexpected changes, that means that 10 Ford Mustangs will now face just eight Chevrolet Camaros next year.

Former Supercars CEO James Warburton has confirmed that he will return to the role after an eight-year absence. After steering the category from 2013-17, the media executive is expected to be back behind his old desk from late July. Current CEO Shane Howard will remain with the organisation in a new role.

Supercars has also confirmed a second event in New Zealand from 2026, with the Ruapuna Park circuit near Christchurch joining the Taupo round on the calendar. It will be the first time that Supercars has raced on NZ's south island.

PHIL BRANAGAN



RACE WINNERS 3 May - 25 May

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

Symmons Plains 10-11 May

Races 1 & 2 Broc Feeney
(Triple Eight Chevrolet)
Race 3 Matthew Payne
(Grove Racing Ford)

POINTS 1 Feeney 894; 2 Will Brown 861; 3 Payne 819.

TCR WORLD TOUR

Mexico City 2-3 May

Race 1 Thed Bjork
(Cyan Racing Lynk & Co)
Races 2 & 3 Esteban Guerrieri
(GOAT Racing Honda)

POINTS 1 Guerrieri 95; 2 Bjork 83; 3 Santiago Urrutia 69.

NASCAR CUP SERIES

Texas Motor Speedway 4 May

Joey Logano
(Team Penske Ford)

Kansas Speedway 11 May

Kyle Larson
(Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet)

Charlotte 25 May

Ross Chastain
(Trackhouse Racing Chevrolet)

POINTS 1 William Byron 499; 2 Larson 470; 3 Christopher Bell 425.

FOOTBALL FANS WON'T HAVE TO MISS ANY BTCC

If you're as much a fan of Morgan Rogers as Adam Morgan, the good news is that the British Touring Car Championship calendar is out for 2026 and it doesn't clash with the football World Cup.

It's not because series boss Alan Gow wants to cheer on the Socceroos; it's so that live broadcaster ITV can focus on the footy without having to leave hefty chunks for tin-tops in its Sunday schedules.

The biggest changes are Thruxton moving to late July and Croft to early September, with Oulton Park shifting forward slightly to early June. Otherwise it's much-unchanged, albeit with four rounds before the summer break, and six after. It kicks off at Donington Park on the 18-19 April, with the finale at Brands Hatch GP on 10-11 October.

MARCUS SIMMONS

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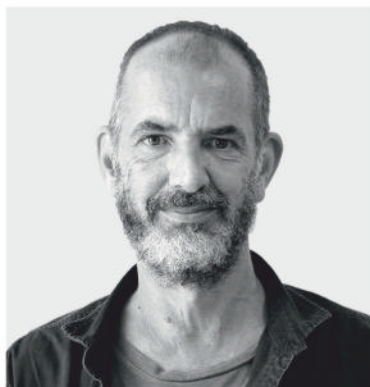


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INSIDER

Marcus Simmons appreciates a BTCC underdog story playing out at Snetterton

It's a good job that Snetterton is bordered only by pig farms, the A11 and the London-to-Norwich train line, because the decibel count from the British Touring Car Championship's final race of the day at the East Anglian venue would have caused many an outraged local resident to put pen to paper in complaint to the local rag.

Everyone loves a good underdog story, and Mikey Doble's victory was right up there. Three months ago, Power Maxed Racing was looking distinctly unlikely to be on the grid after its title sponsor had terminated its ongoing contract. And if the squad's Vauxhall Astras weren't going to be there, then Doble was *certainly* not going to rustle up the budget to land a seat elsewhere. Within weeks, team principal Adam Weaver had pulled in Motor Parts Direct to fill the breach, and Doble's BTCC career was saved.

Weaver has usually used PMR's commercial backing to subsidise each of his drivers but, for 2025, this all had to be placed in the Doble basket. Hence the arrival of tech magnate and arch BTCC enthusiast Nick Halstead in the second Astra from round two at Brands Hatch proving invaluable in shoring up the team's footing.

Ever since his late reprieve, Doble has been properly rapid whenever the cars have hit the track, from official pre-season testing to free practice, qualifying and the races. The Astra is the oldest machine on the grid, and Doble's is the original car first handled by Tom Chilton way back in 2017, but he's been good to his word in vying for the Independents' title against Josh Cook in the One Motorsport Honda, and Restart Racing Hyundai pair Chris Smiley and Dan Lloyd. The other thing Doble pledged was a race win, and now he's ticked that box.

Far from the likes of Chilton, Doble is something of a shrinking violet in public, although in his third BTCC season he is coming out of his skin. "He's great," enthuses Weaver in the aftermath of that win. "He's just so calm and

level-headed. You see the difference – year one, year two, year three – and it takes a while to realise that you deserve to be here and, he's not arrogant at all, but the confidence...

"He was nervous in his first year. Putting his kit on 10 minutes before he needed to because he didn't want to really talk to people I think, but now he's so relaxed, putting his kit on and getting straight in the car. These things make a massive difference. And so does the consistency side of things. He's been with the same team, the same crew for a third year in a row now, and that's what makes a massive difference in this game."

Despite the vintage of the Astra, there's clearly nothing wrong with the chassis. Doble is a smooth driver and the car's progress is fluid-quick rather than sketchy. "I've always thought that if you're smooth and the car's not moving about too much then the car's going its quickest," pointed out Doble after netting his second consecutive Q3 appearance. "When it's dancing around and you're chasing the lap time, that's generally when we're not as quick. It's just trying to maximise what we've got on the day."

Weaver just about kept the band together during those dark winter days, albeit with renowned engineer Martin Broadhurst moonlighting with Smiley at Restart on race weekends. "Genuinely we were at a point where I was seriously having to consider shutting the whole thing down," he recalls. "To even be able to put the deals together to get us on the grid was a massive achievement. All the guys stuck with me – they could have been leaving for jobs just hearing that they might lose theirs. But all the guys and girls have stayed, and this is a perfect way to repay them."

That includes Doble's engineer Dan Rathmill, who started with PMR as an apprentice and, in his first season in his current role, guided Andrew Watson to the Jack Sears Trophy title in 2023. He then did the same with Doble last season, and now he's a race-winning BTCC engineer.

"To even be able to put the deals together to get us on the grid was a massive achievement"

The choice of Rathmill and Doble to go for hard tyres in race one at Snetterton is what ultimately set up the victory on softs in the finale, and Weaver admits: "I was probably like 55% leaning towards the softs but I thought, 'I'll let you make this call'. The pressure Ash [Sutton] put him under... For Mikey to soak that up and manage the gap, it was amazing to watch. It made it all the better that it wasn't just an easy lights-to-flag victory."

The elephant in the room for Doble is budget: "I'm hoping we'll be here all year. You never know what's around the corner but if everything stays the way it is we'll be all right." But it wouldn't do any harm to have more customers at the family's Surrey motorcycle shop, where he works. "And you don't have to be in Surrey – we'll deliver!"

Just as Doble did under pressure at Snetterton. 🏁

JUMPING INTO THE FIRST-CLASS COACH

Four-time champion Colin Turkington is off the BTCC grid this season, but he's in the paddock with West Surrey Racing. How's he finding it, and will he return to the cockpit?

MARCUS SIMMONS

A trim figure is standing in the Brands Hatch pitlane, watching the West Surrey Racing crew getting assembled for end-of-day photos – and is that a wistful look in his eyes? The team is in celebratory mode, as well it might be: three British Touring Car Championship race wins with a trio of drivers; a pair of 1-2s. “Get in the picture, Colin,” exhort a couple of well-meaning WSR folk. “No, no,” he replies with a modest chuckle. “I’ve been in far too many photos.”

Colin Turkington this year finds himself in a new role: coaching Aiden Moffat as the Scot gets to grips with the BMW 330i M Sport alongside reigning champion Jake Hill, rookie sensation Charles Rainford and star up-and-comer Daryl DeLeon. As a four-time champion of the BTCC, he as well as everybody else knows he should be on the grid himself, but such is the current commercial climate... Quite rightly for one of his pedigree, Turkington had been a salaried member of WSR, but it’s well-documented that BMW had been forced to slash its motorsport budgets, and attempts by the team to alleviate this had fallen through.

Until next year? That’s the hope. But the 43-year-old Northern Irishman is either a) not holding his breath, or b) doing a terrific job of playing down anything that may be going on behind the commercial scenery.

“Honestly, I’m not in any better or different position than I was at the end of last year,” sighs Turkington. “At the moment it’s status quo. I basically just have to be patient and see where things are come the end of the season again. Everybody’s mind is now shifted towards the current season and it’s head down, blinkers on for

everybody involved in the championship. I have accepted the position I’m in for this year and, like I’ve said before, I’m enjoying driving different cars in different championships, and just keeping myself sharp and ready for whatever that next opportunity is.

“I don’t feel like I’m any closer to being back in BTCC again next year. I’m just trying to keep my options open because I don’t want to put all my eggs in one basket, and that’s why I’m trying to do a bit more GT stuff this year and just see if there’s a potential opening there. As much as I would love to be back in BTCC again one day, I’m not sure that’s ever going to happen, so I don’t want to put all the chips in that direction.”

Above all, Turkington is renowned as not only a great touring car driver, but also a general motorsport enthusiast. He’s raced this season in the GT Cup in a Ginetta G56, been a class winner in a hotted-up Mazda MX-5, ditto in the Amspeed BMW M3 E36 he has shared in Britcar and Classic Sports Car Club outings with Mark Smith. “I do really enjoy that car,” he enthuses of the M3. “It’s as close to a BTCC car as you’ll ever get in terms of performance, feel, it runs on the same tyre. It’s pretty much bang on – it does the same lap times around most circuits. It’s a bit lighter than a BTCC car, but it feels so similar it’s unbelievable.”

The Touring Car Legendary Old Boys’ network has also secured Turkington a drive in a Ford Mustang at the Brands Hatch Masters Historic meeting because the beast’s regular co-pilot Rob Huff “double booked up again. We’re job-sharing!” And he reckons he’ll be racing at the same venue on the Super Touring Power weekend.

Around that is the coaching work. It’s something >>



*New role includes track walk
(below) with Moffat and WSR
engineer John Waterman*





JEP

*Donington 2024:
the last win, or just
the most recent?*



JEP



MARCUS SIMMONS



JEP

*Turkington (left)
jumped aboard Hill's
car for Brands test*



*First title with WSR,
fighting Plato at
Brands in 2009...*

JEP



*...and fun in the
Amspeed BMW at
Donington, 2025*

NICK WALKER

Turkington has never blown his own trumpet about but, when he called us shortly before the announcement of his stepping down from the BTCC for 2025, he did so from Croft where he was helping out Ginetta Junior kids. Now he's transferred that to a slightly older and more experienced customer in the form of Moffat.

"I've enjoyed trying to pass my experience on in how to drive the BMW and get the most of it, just approaching weekends and how to prepare effectively for them," he explains. "I've enjoyed being involved with another driver and still with West Surrey. It's what I know best – BTCC and how to maximise the BMW package. I didn't do anything with him really pre-season, so I don't think we've quite seen the fruits of our labour yet, but I have no doubt we will and that Aiden will win a race or two."

"It's been strange for me being there and being involved, because when I'm watching the sessions, particularly free practice, I can almost see myself out on the track. I'm almost waiting for myself to come past, and that's a bizarre feeling just because I've done it for 20 years. Even just as the sessions are about to start, I still get the butterflies, and I still get that little bit of anxiety because... I don't quite know if anybody appreciates as much as me what the drivers are going through. As a spectator or somebody on the outside you just see a car going around a circuit, and if you're supporting a driver

"I've enjoyed trying to pass my experience on in how to drive the BMW and get the most of it"

either it goes well or it doesn't go well, but you don't quite really understand what the drivers are going through in terms of the anxieties, the pressure, the physical effort, the mental effort in the car, and just the ups and downs.

"People talk about the BTCC roller coaster, and as a driver you go through so much emotional torment and it's impossible to quantify that unless you *are* the driver. Even though I'm there very much on the periphery now, I know exactly where the drivers' heads are. I think maybe that's where I can help, because as much as you always want the car to be the best it can be, a lot of times you're trying to manage a bad situation because the car's not where you want it or you're having a hard time or you've just had a tough race, and I know exactly how all that feels and, I suppose, how to work forward from there."

That race weekend at Brands in early May was, of course, a complete turnaround for WSR from the late April opener at Donington Park, where the team struggled. Turkington got first-hand experience of the difficulties – caused primarily by weight distribution since the removal of hybrid – in a March test at Brands. Hill was otherwise engaged racing a GT3 Ferrari at Mugello, and WSR called up its old star to climb back aboard the very same car he raced in 2022-24 (Hill's title-winning BMW is now in the hands of Rainford).

"Certainly when I tested the car at the beginning of the season, I had a similar feeling," he reflects. "At the end of

that day the car felt really good. It felt on its toes, the front axle felt really alive, which I loved because that's how I like to drive. But again, the area to work on was the rear axle. It was a little bit not gripped up enough, and I guess that has been an ongoing theme. I think it's moving in the right direction, but everybody in the team is aware that there's going to have to be another step forward required to be on a par with the likes of Excelr8 and NAPA. The job's not done."

Has Turkington's brain been picked on what's required? "I'm in the debriefs," he replies, "and I'm useful because I'm the only one who's driven the car pre-hybrid, so I know what the car felt like then. But motorsport is all about the here and now – it's 'what does the car feel like today and what can we do to make it better?'. I can watch onboards, I can see how the car's reacting and have a good idea in my head of what it might need, but I feel like I can only give or help so much from the outside because I'm not driving it, I'm not feeling exactly what's going on. My help has a ceiling, I feel."

When he's outside the garage or the debriefs, well... Turkington is loving the BTCC. Remember, when he left the series before, after winning the 2009 title, that was to pursue World and Scandinavian touring car programmes. Since his debut in 2002, he's not been present in the series while not racing.

"One of the things I felt at the end of last year, if I'm not going to be racing in the BTCC I'm just going to go back to being a fan of the series," he smiles. "The race days, from my perspective, have been mega you know. Feeling the buzz of the championship and the atmosphere, and having the blinkers off, not being in the pressure cooker of being a driver, it's brilliant, it really is!"

"I arrived into Donington – I was staying at home [just down the M1 in Milton Keynes] that weekend – about 10 o'clock, once all the rush was over to get in, a good hour and a half before the first race, and just parking in the lower fields, I couldn't believe how many cars were in the car park. People were arriving into the circuit absolutely buzzing, and couldn't wait for the races to start, and you can really feel that excitement."

"And Brands Hatch was an even better race day. Having the big delta between the hard and soft compound on a race weekend is really working from an entertainment point of view. It's a great series to be involved with and spectate – I don't think there's anything quite like it."

Yes, but... The rest of us onlookers are mediocre (at best) racing drivers. And there's a race on to become the BTCC's first five-time champion. Surely there must come a time when spectating is not enough for Turkington.

"Just having that slight involvement with the team, your body's still going through the motions and you're still going through those processes of what it's like to be out there," he weighs up. "Of course I've still got that itch to want to drive, but I think as well I still... the feelings that I had at the end of last season and the start of this season, it felt like the right time for me to take a back seat."

And if he moves back into the front seat? There are some future pitlane celebratory photos to be taken, with Turkington bang centre in the foreground. ✨



2 Seas pair rides British GT wave

The 2 Seas pairing of 2021 DTM champion Maximilian Gotz and British GT regular Kevin Tse had endured a somewhat inauspicious start to the season. Instead, it was the sister Mercedes of rookie Kiern Jewiss and GT4 graduate Charles

Dawson that was ruling British GT's armada. But fortunes reversed at Oulton Park. A win and a second place for Gotz/Tse (pictured leading the field out of Lodge amid bank holiday rain) have catapulted the pair from 51 points adrift of their

team-mates to now being just 10 behind. A penalty for contact in race one and an incorrect race-two stop for slick tyres hurt the #42 crew's bid, and Optimum McLaren duo Marvin Kirchhofer/Morgan Tillbrook have also closed to within 18 points.



Photographer JEP

Where Oulton Park, Cheshire, UK

When Monday 26 May 2025

Details Canon EOS R3,
RF100-500mm lens, 1/800th @ F6.3

Co-driver Roberts was in victory contention alongside Williams before Jim Clark crash



RALLYING & VSCC

Dark day for UK motorsport

Two popular figures, leading co-driver Dai Roberts and historics competitor Julian Grimwade, were killed hours apart

PAUL LAWRENCE

Motorsport in the UK suffered a double tragedy over the late May bank holiday weekend when two competitors died in two very different disciplines within the space of three hours on 24 May.

Leading rally co-driver Dai Roberts died in an accident on the Jim Clark Rally in the Scottish Borders when the Hyundai i20N Rally2 he was sharing with James Williams crashed off the stage and into a solid structure. Less than three hours later, Vintage

Sports-Car Club driver Julian Grimwade lost his life when his 1913 Romano Special crashed on the opening lap of a race at Donington Park.

Both competitors were hugely popular members of their very different motorsport communities and countless social media posts showed just how well-respected each was in their respective field.

Roberts, aged 39 from south-west Wales, competed alongside some of the best drivers in national



rallying and often contested up to 20 rallies in a year. He also drove his own Peugeot 205 GTI on a few events each year, when co-driving commitments allowed, most recently on the Manx Rally in April. The Jim Clark Rally, which runs on closed public roads from a base in Duns, was his fifth rally of 2025 in the co-driver's seat as he rejoined Williams for the third round of this year's British Rally Championship.

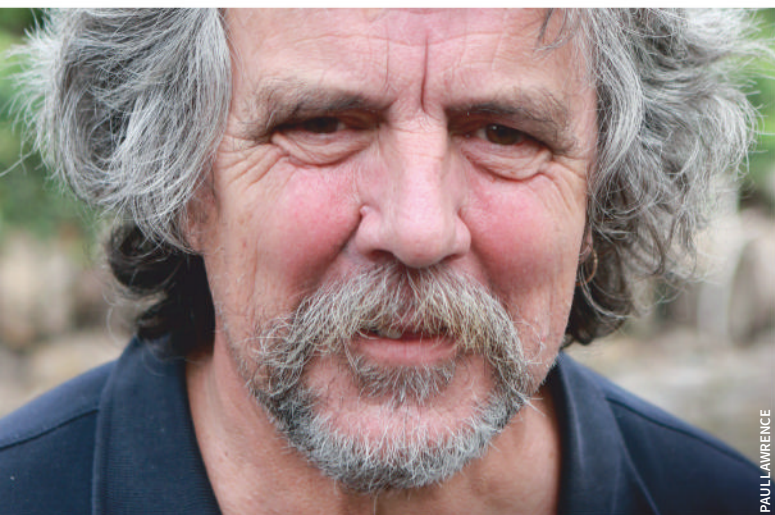
After six special stages on the

Friday evening, Williams and Roberts were challenging for the lead when the accident happened at just after 1030 on the Edrom test, the second stage of Saturday's leg.

Despite the best efforts of those first to arrive at the crash site and the medical and rescue teams, Roberts could not be saved and was pronounced dead at the scene. His friends and rivals paid tribute to a great competitor who was a dedicated family man and a true friend to many.



Grimwade was a prolific competitor, including in his Romano Pikes Peak replica



PAUL LAWRENCE

Williams was transferred to hospital in Edinburgh with serious but not life-threatening injuries. The balance of the rally was cancelled, along with the standalone Jim Clark Reivers Rally, which had been scheduled to run the following day.

Roberts's death followed the loss of his younger brother Gareth 'Jaffa' in 2012. He was co-driving alongside Craig Breen when they suffered an accident on the Targa Florio rally in Italy. There was

further tragedy when Dai was co-driving Irish driver Timothy Cathcart on the 2014 Ulster Rally when their Citroen DS3 left the road and Cathcart was killed.

Meanwhile, at Donington, Grimwade was taking part in the one-off Mephistopheles Trophy for pre-1925 racing cars in the second VSCC race meeting of the season when he crashed at the Old Hairpin on the opening lap of the 20-minute race. Once his death was confirmed, the

remainder of the meeting was abandoned.

Aged 72 from Weybridge in Surrey, Grimwade had a passion for pre-Second World War machinery. He was heavily involved with the Brooklands Museum and was vice-chairman of the Brooklands Members organisation, and was renowned for his warm, outgoing character and sense of humour.

Grimwade was a relatively late starter in motorsport and had been competing since 2010 after retiring from a career in conference organising. A trip to the Cresta Run for toboggans prompted a move to get into vintage racing and he started with a Lagonda Rapier single-seater.

He went on to enjoy great success in both racing and speed events with the well-known one-off Frazer Nash single-seater previously campaigned by James Baxter. Most recently, he switched his attention to the Romano Special, a replica of the first Pikes Peak winner.

Back in 1916, Rea Lentz won the first running of the 12-mile

hillclimb in Colorado in the Oakland Romano, which was powered by an eight-litre Curtiss aero engine. Grimwade's car, which also came from Baxter, used a 1913 Oakland chassis and a Curtiss OX-5 aero engine built between 1914 and 1918.

Although their chosen motorsport disciplines could not be more diverse, Roberts and Grimwade shared a deep love for the sport.

Their loss has cast a long shadow over this year's motorsport programme in the UK. Autosport sends sincere condolences to their respective families, friends and fellow competitors.

Governing body Motorsport UK has launched investigations into each incident. In a statement, it said: "Motorsport UK is extremely grateful for the medical staff, officials, marshals, rescue personnel and emergency services who managed the incidents for their responsiveness and professionalism."



SMRC

PLANS UNDER WAY TO RETURN CAR RACING TO INGLISTON

Talks are progressing to return car racing to the Scottish Ingliston track for the first time in 30 years.

The circuit, located just outside Edinburgh, held its last race meeting in October 1994 (above) and its closure left Knockhill as Scotland's sole circuit. But, following a change in management of the Highland Society that operates the Ingliston site, there is renewed optimism about racing making a comeback.

"The Highland Society are keen to expand their activities and they're very keen for us to get going with this," said Scottish Motor Racing Club president Hugh McCaig, who is involved in the discussions having previously run the circuit in the 1980s. "We would like to get the circuit open as a circuit for club motorsport

and historic racing. With modern technology and different types of barrier available now, we're pretty confident we can get it up and running pretty quickly."

He said initial talks have taken place with Motorsport UK and plans are now being developed to make the investment needed to enable the circuit to be licenced to hold race meetings again. The initial target is to stage the first event at Ingliston next year.

McCaig added that the venue's location brings many benefits and makes it more accessible than Knockhill. "Geographically, it's a fantastic spot because it's got facilities all round the circuit," he explained. "We've got hotels, a good bus service and a tram service all within yards of the circuit – it's probably the best-connected circuit in the whole of the UK. And the facilities at Ingliston are amazing."

The circuit first opened in 1965 and a host of Scotland's greatest motorsport stars raced at the venue during their careers, including the likes of Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Rikki Steedman's FF1600
at the final 1994 event

154 50 YEARS OF
KNOCKHILL CAR RACING

BRITISH HILLCLIMB

NOVA SAYS NEW HILLCLIMB TYRES READY FOR AUGUST

The new supply of hillclimb tyres from Nova Motorsport is scheduled to start at the August Shelsley Walsh rounds of the British Hillclimb Championship.

After the closure of the Avon tyres motorsport department at the end of 2023, the supply of tyres for the bigger single-seaters in the British Hillclimb series was under question until Nova Motorsport confirmed plans to take over production and move it to Palmeira in Portugal.

However, the supply of tyres over the opening weeks of this year's BHC has been a major topic of debate as the remaining stock of new Avons has dwindled.

In a statement, Nova said: "We will begin production of BHC-specification tyres in Palmeira in July. However, it is crucial to understand that this does not mean the tyres will be immediately available to customers. An intensive testing programme will be undertaken."

Nova has confirmed that it provisionally plans to launch new tyre availability

at Shelsley Walsh in August. With BHC rounds at Shelsley Walsh and Doune in June and then a busy July featuring four events, including the annual trip to the Channel Island venues, some competitors will be struggling to find sufficient usable tyres until the new stock comes on stream.

Nova added: "British hillclimbing will be the first, and so far the only, motorsport discipline where Nova Motorsport is providing a direct factory sales and fitting service."

"In 2026 this support will be extended further at key events, alongside the continued ramp up of product availability. Nova Motorsport will maintain its ongoing commitment to the BHC and its competitors."

Over the opening weeks of the season, some competitors have tried Hoosier tyres as a possible alternative but, currently, most of the leading BHC contenders are continuing with whatever remaining stock of Avon tyres they hold.

PAUL LAWRENCE



PAUL LAWRENCE

Abbott plans to tackle the Roger Albert Clark Rally in V12 monster



PAUL LAWRENCE

RALLYING

UNUSUAL XJS SET FOR TOUGH R.A.C. RALLY

Veteran team boss, engineer and driver Ed Abbott is gearing up for the challenge of tackling this year's Roger Albert Clark Rally in an unusual choice of car: a 5.3-litre V12-engined Jaguar XJS.

Abbott fielded the unlikely Jaguar on three smaller forest rallies in 2024 and successfully finished all of them as he learned about keeping the XJS on gravel forest roads and out of the ditches. Now, the 50-year-old sportscar is being rebuilt ahead

of being the first Jaguar to tackle the gruelling five-day forest rallying marathon in November.

Abbott first rallied in the 1970s in his native south-west of England in a 1275cc-engined Austin A40, but was better known for running the Abbott Racing team in production saloon cars through the 1980s, with his brother Lionel racing on behalf of Saab UK with considerable success in a variety of Saabs.

Abbott's passion for the XJS stems from when he started his career as a Jaguar apprentice and later became senior development engineer at the Jaguar factory at Browns Lane in Coventry. He was heavily involved in the birth of the XJS

and now runs Abbott Jaguar, which is an authority on the model and its V12 engine.

"At the ripe old age of 70, there is a bit of life in the old dog yet and we wanted to celebrate 50 years of the XJS by doing some big events, including the Roger Albert Clark Rally," said Abbott. "I love driving it and thrashing the nuts off it and proving to people that they are really useful tools in motorsport."

Meanwhile, another XJS in action recently is the original Group A machine of prolific historics racer Richard Meins. He finished a class-winning sixth overall alongside Jack Tetley in the Historic Touring Car Challenge at the Donington Historic Festival in the ex-Tom Walkinshaw/Win Percy car that won the Guia Trophy at Macau in 1984. Back then, it ran in JPS livery but has now returned to period works Jaguar colours.

"I was in Macau when the car won in 1984 so I'm big fan of these cars," Meins explained. "I've still got the photographs I took of it that weekend."

He intends to use the car more regularly now and a run at the Silverstone Festival in August is considered likely.

PAUL LAWRENCE

Meins was a class winner in ex-Walkinshaw/Percy XJS



STEVE JONES

STEVE JONES



MALLOCK'S PRE-WAR DEBUT LE MANS PREP

Ray Mallock raced a pre-war car for the first time at the Donington Historic Festival (above) as preparation for competing in the 1930 Bentley at July's Le Mans Classic. "It's quite a step – this was the lead up to Le Mans as I've always wanted to do Classic Le Mans," said Mallock, who tackled the modern 24 Hours eight times.

RARE TERRIER Mk4 GROWLS IN UK AGAIN

A unique Series 2 version of the Terrier Mk4 Formula Junior, raced in period by engine builder Brian Hart, was in action at Donington Historic. "It's only raced once in this country in 20 years," said new owner Adrian Hole, the car having won at Mallory in 2020.

BRANDS LOTUS 51 FF1600 CELEBRATION

The Lotus 51 Formula Ford will be celebrated at July's Legends of Brands Hatch Superprix. Back in 1967, the inaugural race for the FF1600 category featured mainly Lotus 51s and the Historic FF1600 Championship is planning to recreate that very first grid, featuring as many 51s as possible.

NEW THRUXTON VIEWING AREA

A new spectating area at Thruxton will be open from this weekend's British Touring Car event. An elevated platform at Woodham Hill, which will provide a vantage point of cars exiting Church and up to Club, has been created and will also feature food/drink stalls.



THE RACER

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1 ALI BRAY

RYAN AUTOSPORT NATIONAL RANKINGS

BRAY LEADS THE WAY AS AUTOSPORT RANKINGS RETURN

Some of motorsport's most celebrated events take place during the month of May, and another important feature is the launch of the Ryan Motorsport Insurance Autosport National Driver Rankings! For those unfamiliar with Autosport's winners' table, it's based on the simple premise of finding the most successful driver during the UK/Irish season in terms of race wins.

Every victory is treated equally, whether it's Charles Rainford's maiden British Touring Car triumph or another Paul Sibley win in the Midget & Sprite Challenge. Class wins are also counted, provided the divisions are based upon car characteristics and there are a minimum of six starters.

Often some familiar faces appear at the summit of the leaderboard but there was a new name who led the way when our first table was produced on 8 May. Steve Gambrell may be in his first full season, but the Porsche pilot's inexperience certainly has not held

him back. He has already tasted success in a variety of categories, including the Britcar Endurance Championship (ably assisted by BTCC ace Dan Lloyd), the Classic Sports Car Club's Slicks Series and the British Racing & Sports Car Club Pro Sports Sprint contest.

Gambrell was knocked off top spot a couple of weeks later by Mazda MX-5 star Ali Bray. Better known for preparing the Japanese sportscars, Bray has taken to the wheel himself this year and is currently unbeaten in the BRSCC's Mazda MX-5 series for Mk1 models. He's therefore sitting pretty at the head of the table on nine wins.

Gambrell recently slipped to third amid Rocco Coronel's Ginetta Junior domination, the Red Bull Junior bagging seven wins to equal the Porsche racer's tally. Completing the top five are James Ibbotson, who has enjoyed Pre-'66 Touring Cars class success, and another MX-5 maestro, Aidan Hills.

For weekly top-50 tables, head to [autosport.com/national](https://www.autosport.com/national)

LEADERBOARD

POS	DRIVER (CAR)	OVERALL WINS	CLASS WINS	TOTAL
1	Ali Bray (Mazda MX-5 Mk1)	9	0	9
2	Rocco Coronel (Ginetta G40 Junior Evo)	7	0	7
3	Steve Gambrell (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)	7	0	7
4	James Ibbotson (Hillman Imp Super)	0	7	7
5	Aidan Hills (Mazda MX-5 Mk3)	6	0	6
6	Paul Sibley (MG Midget)	6	0	6
7	Will Blackwell-Chambers (Mazda MX-5 Mk3)	6	0	6
8	Connor Kay (Lotus Elan 26R/TVR Tuscan/MG Midget)	5	1	6
9	Ian Bower (BMW M3)	3	3	6
10	Alistair Camp (Honda Civic Type R FN2)	2	4	6

Note: All car races in UK and Ireland are included except qualification/repechage, consolation and handicap races. No races in other countries. Class wins are only counted when there are at least six starters in the class, except: when the race is part of a multi-stage event where six or more have taken part in earlier heats that feed into a semi-final or final; when multiple championships are merged in the same race, the 'overall' winner from the slower championship

can count a class win as long as that championship has at least 10 starters across all classes. Only classes divided by car characteristics are included, not those divided by driver characteristics such as ability, professional status, age, experience (for example rookie or pro-am classes). Each race counts only once, so an overall winner's class win is not added. Where there is a tie, overall wins take precedence. Where there is still a tie, average grid size for a driver's wins determines the order.



3 STEVE GAMBRELL



4 JAMES IBBOTSON



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INSIDER

Ed Hardy on British GT's successful break with tradition

If there is one word that describes the sporting year thus far, it's 'iconoclasm'. The idea of 'breaking image', going against tradition and embracing what's new; something that's occurring in abundance in 2025. Everton Football Club, for example, left Goodison Park, its home of 133 years, for a modern stadium across the city of Liverpool; line judges will be no more at Wimbledon this summer; the FIFA Club World Cup will debut a new format.

It's a year of change. And the same applies to British GT, with the series' campaign not starting at Oulton Park for only the third time since 2006, Donington Park receiving the honour of hosting the opening race meeting in April.

This came after a contentious Easter weekend last year, when constant rain presented drivers with the ultimate challenge of negotiating the very unforgiving Oulton layout unscathed. It came as no surprise that this proved tricky for many, and various incidents led to just 23 minutes of green-flag running in that weekend's second one-hour race. It's almost generous to even call it a 'race', with more wheel-to-wheel action undertaken by your local boy racers down the high street on a Sunday afternoon. Something needed to be done. British GT therefore pushed its Oulton visit to the final May Bank Holiday weekend, round three of the season, in the hope of better weather with drivers – particularly rookies – tackling the circuit better acquainted with their machinery.

And the overriding feeling leaving Cheshire was that the move was a very successful one. "At the start of the year everybody's still a little bit rusty, everybody's super-keen to get out and show themselves," says reigning champion Rob Collard. "It's proved, the two times I've done British GT in the past at Oulton Park [2020 and 2024], there's been safety cars. Predominantly, the race has always been wet.

"To be quick at Oulton Park, you've really got to put it out there and the margin of error is so narrow. I just think

sometimes certain drivers drive above their limit and here really shows, if you do that, you get caught out and Oulton Park is not forgiving."

Collard speaks for all drivers when he talks of Oulton being unforgiving. It's arguably the hardest track in Britain, with its very tight and twisty layout, meaning just one small error could put a car in the wall. It therefore doesn't do much for the spectacle if drivers are thrown straight into the deep end in Cheshire. "You need some confidence and some races to be really quick," says Maximilian Gotz of the track he likes to call the 'Mini Nurburgring'.

Some drivers need to ease their way into the season; starting with Donington and Silverstone in 2025 was perfect for that. A dry Donington contest meant there were few interruptions while Silverstone... well, the Silverstone 500 was still as hectic as ever.

Nevertheless, it meant teams arrived at Oulton with at least some data to go off, which is especially important for rookies placing trust in their car. "I'm glad you've asked that," responds rookie Luke Garlick after finishing third in race two at Oulton, having scored just 1.5 points until then. "We've come to Oulton Park with some data to drive the car, rather than just come in first round and be blind. I think it helps at this track, just having some confidence in myself and the car. I think that's a massive reason why we've done so well this weekend."

The improvement compared to last year was stark. The event being held closer to summer led to better conditions and a dry opening race can be attributed to there not being multiple disruptions. Obviously, it's still Oulton Park and its location in the northern countryside surrounded by hills means rain is always a possibility. Sure enough, race two was held in mixed conditions, but drivers were better prepared to deal with that, leading to around double the amount of green-flag running compared to last year.

"To be quick at Oulton, you've really got to put it out there and the margin of error is so narrow"

"It was a welcome change on the calendar," agrees Optimum Motorsport boss Shaun Goff. "It's quite daunting and it's not very forgiving, this place, so I'll be in favour of keeping this round as round three, or later in the year."

That is a popular opinion throughout the paddock. Marc Warren, one of Goff's GT4 drivers, thinks "the organisers have done a really good job", while 2020 overall champion Sandy Mitchell reckons "they'll keep it going forward". Considering the success of this year's Oulton weekend, the championship must. The track has found its perfect spot on the calendar and any reversion would be a disaster.

Sometimes what's new isn't always better, but on this occasion it is. Now let's stop the talk of dropping Oulton from the calendar altogether, because what a beautiful circuit it is... 🏁

NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

The month of May was touched with great sadness in UK motorsport, but there were also some impressive achievements and memorable races. Here are just a few



FROM MODERN F4 TO HISTORIC CORTINA

It's fair to say that no one had ever before jumped from racing a modern British Formula 4 single-seater one weekend to starring in an historic Lotus Cortina the next. Yet Harri Reynolds did so with aplomb when he scored a remarkable Jack Sears Trophy win at the Donington Historic Festival.

Driving Pete Smith's Cortina, Reynolds was instantly at home and stormed through to triumph, despite a chaotic Old Hairpin melee on the first lap that left him 18th. He grabbed the lead on the final lap when the Nigel Greensall/John Spiers Mustang faltered.

RED BULL GIVES YOU WINS

Ginetta Junior has a justified reputation for producing close, unpredictable races. But there's no disputing who the current star of the series is – Red Bull Junior Rocco Coronel has now won six of the first nine races. And he was just 0.003 seconds away from completing an Oulton Park hat-trick, with Fred Green winning the drag to the line.

Another Red Bull protegee achieving success in the UK is Fionn McLaughlin, the Irishman taking his first British Formula 4 victory at Snetterton to grab the points lead and demonstrate that Helmut Marko has some exciting young talents on his books.





#400 TOPS CARRERA CUP'S 400TH RACE

Taking your first win in any racing series is special, no matter the circumstances. But when it happens to be that category's 400th contest, and you are racing in a car numbered

400 to celebrate the occasion, it's that bit extra special. And that's what James Wallis achieved in the opening Carrera Cup GB race at Snetterton.

JTR driver Wallis blasted ahead of polesitter Sid Smith off the line to claim an emotional triumph.

"I think I'm going to have to stick with it now!" Wallis quipped of his new number. "I was crying coming into the pits – a lot of hard work has gone in."

While contact with Smith sent Wallis spinning in race two, more Carrera Cup history was made

when Max Coates, another first-time victor, headed an all Pro-Am outright podium – a feat that had never occurred in the previous 400 races. JTR pair Ollie Jackson and Josh Stanton followed the Graves Motorsport driver home.



CAREY SMASHES BISHOPSCOURT LAP RECORD

The humble Bishopscourt track in Northern Ireland held its annual event for cars in mid-May and featured a major reduction in the lap record. Cian Carey's 1m01.352s in his Dallara 320 was a second faster than the previous best of Tony Greenan, runner-up to Carey in both of the BOSS Ireland contests.



CURLEY CLAIMS MINI THRILLER

Mini Miglia races are often exciting, but the second bout at Brands Hatch's GT World Challenge Europe event was particularly spectacular. Ian Curley, Rupert Deeth, Kane Astin and Aaron Smith battled throughout, with Curley a length ahead as the quartet took the flag covered by just 0.143 seconds.

CELEBRATING HALF A CENTURY OF CAR RACING AT KNOCKHILL

Here's the story of how the Scottish venue went from humble beginnings to becoming a fixture of the UK motorsport scene

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

In the early 1970s, Fife farmer Tom Kinnaird had an idea. The landowner and racing enthusiast couldn't resist the temptation of creating his very own circuit within the natural contours of the Scottish countryside.

Along with friend David Brown, Kinnaird devised an eight-turn track, joining old service roads with a disused colliery railway line to create a circuit that – unbeknown to them – would eventually become one of the most popular and demanding race venues in the UK.

Having officially opened a year prior to bikes only, 1975 marked the eagerly anticipated debut of car racing at the track. Fifty years later, Scottish motorsport icons past and present recently gathered to celebrate half a century of four-wheeled action at Knockhill.

But it is perhaps the lesser-known name of Edward Labinjoh, an Edinburgh car dealer, who holds the most significant role in Knockhill folklore. With victory in the 10-lap Production Saloon race on 18 May 1975, he became the circuit's first car racing victor.

THE FIRST RACE WINNER

"I'd had a reasonable run during that season up until then," says Labinjoh. "And so, if you're at the top of the championship, you always have a target on your back. I remember that I was coming to a new circuit, so it was unfamiliar to everyone, and I suppose I was probably more nervous than usual about coming to a new circuit.

"But, within a few laps, I absolutely loved it! Coming down the hill, picking the kerb and the car lifting up, it had so much grip when it came down. I had an Alfa

Romeo GTV 2000 that year, so it was a standard car with slightly better tyres than normal. You could make some modifications to allegedly make it faster, but it didn't really make that much of a difference.

"But, as soon as I drove the track, I loved Knockhill and raced a few more times. The track opened in 1975 and I actually retired the following year, so I didn't race at Knockhill very long unfortunately."

The opening up of the circuit to car racing marked a significant moment in Knockhill's history. Indeed, Kinnaird had managed to attract a certain Chris Amon – then in the twilight of his Formula 1 career – and his Talon Formula 5000 machine to take part in the official opening ceremony, shortly before Labinjoh's triumph.

AMBITION, FRUSTRATION AND REBUILDING

Already, plans were afoot to develop this once barren farmland into an international racing venue capable of hosting grand prix level events. Kinnaird and Brown sold off the land to businessman Denys Dobbie, whose vision included extending the track beyond Clark corner, relocating the pitlane and paddock to the far side and constructing a 200-bed hotel and sports complex complete with a boating lake and equestrian centre.

They were ambitious plans to say the least – and proved financially impossible to carry out. Dobbie's company went bust and Kinnaird bought the circuit back before eventually securing a permanent buyout from bike racer and business owner Derek Butcher in 1983.

"The money they made in those early years, I'll never know how much it was, was never invested," recalls >>



JIM MOIR

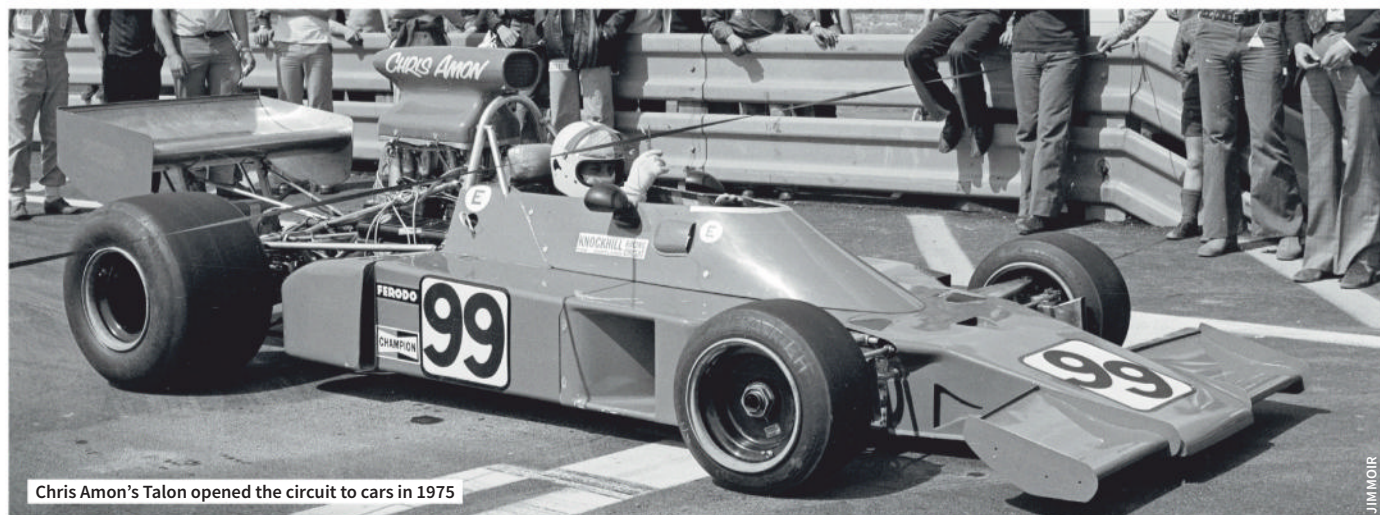
Former champions gathered for anniversary event



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The first race winner Eddie Labinjoh, then and now



Chris Amon's Talon opened the circuit to cars in 1975

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Butcher. “It was just made and kept and the place just got more and more worn out and run down. When I bought it, I knew full well that it was going to be a big task, looking at the work that needed doing.”

“I started racing bikes when I was 22 and it was my life, I was absolutely possessed by racing. I was also running a business making burglar and fire alarms and was very successful, over the years we had done over 2000 installations.”

“Then, Tom Kinnaird heard that I sold the business and, being a wily old farmer, he rang me one night and said, ‘I think you could run Knockhill and do a good job of it’, and I said, ‘I think you’re right, Tom!’ so it was a very short conversation.”

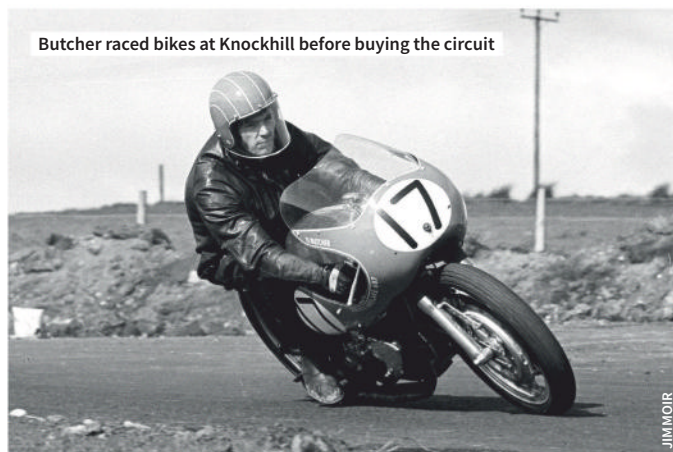
“It was completely new ground for me. It’s a bit like being on the other side of a pub, where you think you can run it better than the landlord but, when you get behind the bar, you have no clue.”

Much of the work undertaken was unseen. From electrical systems to paddock generators and a comprehensive toilet pipe system that feeds into 12 separate septic tanks, developing key facilities was critical to securing the venue’s long-term success.

If Knockhill was to attract top-level national categories such as the British Touring Car Championship and, eventually, British Superbikes, it needed to get its house in order first.

“If I had known what was going to be involved, then I would never have bought it,” Butcher confesses. “It was millions being spent, we were in a lot of debt, but I knew that, with the development work getting done, it would start to make money.”

“And that happened when Alan Gow had faith in Knockhill to deliver a touring car round in 1992 – the BTCC really helped revitalise the circuit.”



Butcher raced bikes at Knockhill before buying the circuit

JIMMOIR

THE BTCC ARRIVES AT KNOCKHILL

With the future of the Ingliston circuit on the outskirts of Edinburgh becoming increasingly shaky at the start of the new decade, Knockhill took up the mantle as ‘Scotland’s national motorsport centre’, its popularity enhanced in no small part due to the BTCC’s arrival. For championship chief Gow, the allure of Knockhill was clear.

“For us, Scotland needed to have a round of the BTCC and Derek and his team were so enthusiastic, and bent over backwards to make it happen,” explains Gow. “Once Derek came to us with his vision of applying for a round of the BTCC, we came up to Knockhill to have a look. It didn’t look as good as it does now, but we shared in that vision; we had to be racing north of the border.”

“The drivers love the circuit, and I am so glad that we made this decision. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a dull touring car race at Knockhill.” ➤➤

“IT’S LIKE BEING AT A PUB, WHERE YOU THINK YOU CAN RUN IT BETTER, BUT YOU HAVE NO CLUE”



The BTCC arrives at Knockhill in 1992

JEP



“I WAS CHATTING TO TARQUINI ABOUT THE JOY OF THOSE FIRST FEW CORNERS AND CATCHING THE KERBS”



Vauxhall's John Cleland flew the flag for Scottish fans in that inaugural visit from the tin-top championship in 1992 as he fought the BMW pairing of Tim Harvey and Steve Soper all the way down to that infamous finale at Silverstone.

But Cleland, who took 17 outright wins in the BTCC and two titles, never truly gelled with the circuit; ironically, Cleland donned Knockhill's name on his car and helmet throughout his career but only achieved one win at his local track during his lengthy spell in UK motorsport's top flight.

"The very first time I came here, I loved the place and I think the whole team with Derek at the helm have always been very welcoming," Cleland reflects. "It's a long way for the touring car teams to come, but they have to remember that we'd do the same, going to Thruxton, Silverstone and Brands Hatch.

"There's something about this track that I didn't quite have, I couldn't get my head around winning here. It was beyond me, and I've no idea why.

"I always thought I drove fairly well at the track but there was just something about it that was lacking. I'd go to Brands, Oulton, Donington and win races but I couldn't do it here!"

ICONIC TOURING CAR MEMORIES

Having long retired from racing, Labinjoh was suddenly back in demand by 1994. Not by Cleland but by, of all people, Gabriele Tarquini. Alfa Romeo had entered the BTCC as a works team that year and, keen to make the most of the trip north, team principal Nini Russo wanted something up his sleeve for his drivers.

"He came to me because I was the first winner at Knockhill, and I sold Alfas, and we had that link," recounts Labinjoh. "Russo invited me to dinner the night before the touring car weekend and I was chatting to Tarquini and [team-mate Giampiero] Simoni, and I was talking about the joy of those first few corners and catching the kerbs and really pushing the car.

"And, of course, Tarquini got really unlucky with [Alain] Menu when he was on two wheels, and he went flying! He was quite shaken after that, I have to say."

Watching from the very corner where Tarquini performed his now famous barrel roll was a young Gordon Shedden, who would go on to become BTCC champion three times (in 2012, 2015 and 2016).

Now a seasoned veteran, Shedden owes a lot to Knockhill: having won the Fiesta Zetec Championship in 2000, he became an instructor at the circuit under the tutelage of Ian Forrest and met his future wife Jillian (nee Butcher, daughter of Derek). Knockhill also provided a career reset in both 2005 and 2009.

"The only thing I did in 2005 was a one-off at Knockhill in the VIP car in Porsche Carrera Cup, which Autosport organised," Shedden explains. "And I had a really good run, finished on the podium and that was the catalyst in ending up in the BTCC with Matt Neal at Dynamics.

"The same thing happened again in 2009, when I hired a SEAT, had a good run again and ended up back at Dynamics and won three titles!"

KEY DATES

1974	Knockhill circuit first opens
1975	Inaugural car races are held
1983	Derek Butcher buys the circuit
1992	BTCC visits for the first time
2018	Latest resurfacing of the track

THE MODERN-DAY KNOCKHILL

Although the track layout has remained the same since 1974, much has changed around Knockhill over the past 50 years, most notably in terms of safety and infrastructure.

"We've resurfaced twice [most recently in 2018] and the last time we did it, it cost just over £300,000," Butcher says. "We've Tarmacked the paddock because Alan told us that the guys with slick tyres could really do with Tarmac in the paddocks, so we did that.

"We've spent hundreds of thousands on safety development as well, mainly for bikes, with gravel traps and air barriers around the circuit. Every one of these air pillows is close to £1000 a pop. I think the last time we counted, we had around 160 of the big cushions and around 200 of the small ones."

Now in charge of day-to-day operations, Derek's daughter Jillian Shedden is seeing the reward after substantial investment. "The biggest challenge we have now is fitting everything in," she explains. "Aside from the race weekends, we've got a lot of activities, from trackdays, driving experiences to go-karting and the fireworks display. And we've only got a set number of weekends, but we've done a good job of filling our calendar.

"Our job is about making sure people enjoy their racing and experiences and keep coming back, so building a good product with a good atmosphere is really what we're all about."

Key to that experience not only lies with satisfying customers and competitors but also in providing a platform for those looking to get into motorsport in other areas.

Having retired from his day job, Dr Robert Johnston has been one of the circuit's best-known voices over the past 30 years in the Garry Stagg commentary tower. An amateur racer in his day, Johnston is now able to dedicate his time to the sport he loves, alongside a rotating cast of colleagues such as Radio Le Mans commentator Peter MacKay and the up-and-coming Chris Hosie.

For half a century now, Knockhill has been a staple in UK motorsport and has helped launch the careers of star names such as David Coulthard, Allan McNish, Dario Franchitti, and many others. From assisting national title winners to future world champions, the focus now is to ensure this small plot of land in rural Fife can continue to play a significant part in Scottish racing for another 50 years. 🏁



TAKING A DIFFERENT LANCIA ROUTE

This car looks like a Delta Integrale, with a boot, right? Well, yes, but turning a Lancia Prisma into a competition car has been no easy task

PAUL LAWRENCE

Turning a rare Lancia Prisma Integrale into a competition car for speed events has been a remarkable journey for Otto Blank. Six years, an average of 10 hours per week and numerous engineering challenges have turned an obscure road car into a well thought out and unique hillclimb machine, which made its competitive debut this spring.

The basic Prisma was launched in 1982 and was a popular addition to the Lancia stable. But the Italian company's motorsport focus at the time, apart from its world sportscar effort, was deeply rooted in the 037 rally car, which was superseded by the outrageous Group B Delta S4. The Group A era of the Delta started in 1987 after Group B was outlawed, and Lancia enjoyed huge success with first the Delta HF and then the Integrale. Between 1987 and 1992, Lancia won the drivers' championship four times with Juha Kankkunen and Miki Biasion, plus six consecutive manufacturers' crowns.

By 1986, the second-series Prisma featured a four-wheel-drive option with the same twin-cam, eight-valve engine as the Delta, and disc brakes all round. In June 1987 the Prisma four-wheel-drive version was updated and rebadged the Prisma Integrale.

In truth, the 4WD Prisma was aimed at those who wanted extra grip in poor weather and over rough ground rather than any sporting ambition. The Delta was doing nicely as the sporty option. While the Delta had a complex Torsen rear differential, the Prisma had a simpler one with a diff lock controlled by a switch on the dashboard, which was useful in low-grip conditions. It

was not about performance motoring until Blank got involved.

About 25 years ago he built a motorbike-engined MK Indy for hillclimbing and later ran a Formula Renault single-seater on the hills before taking a break from the sport in 2009. "I've always been into cars," says Telford-based Blank. "When I was 14 we moved to Canada for a year or two. Canadian education offers two routes. You can go to college or you can learn practical stuff. I was never really interested in going to college and they had a course called autoshop – you just learn about engines and stuff like that.

"Six or seven years ago I wanted to buy a Delta, but they were getting to be big money and I saw this on eBay. It had been in a barn for 15 years and I got it at a good price." From the online photos, he identified it as a Prisma Integrale. "Apart from the rear diff, it has exactly the same mechanicals as the Delta Integrale, but it was not sold in the UK. The turbo was a later bolt-on. It's a 1987 car and this one came to the UK in 1989. I bought it six years ago. Back in 2000, apparently, it went through an auction at Hereford for just £300. In fact, I think there are only three Prisma Integrales in the UK and the other two are probably converted from Deltas. So this one is very, very rare."

It was reasonably solid and Blank bought it knowing that it would need a lot of work. A friend suggested getting it acid dipped: "That was a bit of a risk! But I was surprised at how little it had been eaten. It took six years to do it all. COVID helped, because we had a lot of downtime. It gave the big push it needed to get the welding done and the cage fitted. I've rebuilt the engine.

"I also decided that there were a few

items that were going to be unreliable so we got rid of all of the wiring and I rebuilt the wiring loom. I took the belt-driven power steering off it and fitted a Vauxhall Astra electric power steering pump. I got rid of the water pump as well and fitted a BMW electric water pump. The thinking was to try and take as much off the engine drive as possible, to free up some horsepower.

"I tried to build in a little bit of reliability. I took the air diff off the back and got a Delta Evo diff fitted. Obviously, it didn't have any of the arches on it that it's got now."

The Prisma's competition debut was at Loton Park over the first weekend of April. This did not go smoothly. The cambelt snapped on the road the previous Wednesday, and that meant getting the head off to inspect the damage, which was far less than it might have been. "It was not too bad at all: we were very, very lucky," reckons Blank.

On that first weekend a couple of cautious practice runs were completed before a gearbox oil leak developed, so it was back to the workshop to take the gearbox out. Two bearings were replaced and it was all back together in time for the mid-May Loton Park hillclimb. This time it ran impeccably.

"I'm keen to do more hillclimbing," adds Blank. "At the moment, we're just testing with a low rev limit as the engine hasn't done many miles, and there's lots more potential to come."

It's likely that Blank's car is the only Prisma Integrale currently being used in competition. "If you're going to do something like this," he smiles, "you've got to be prepared to take on a challenge and go through the pain. But it's given me massive amounts of pleasure as well!" ❧



FINISHING STRAIGHT

Canadian GP

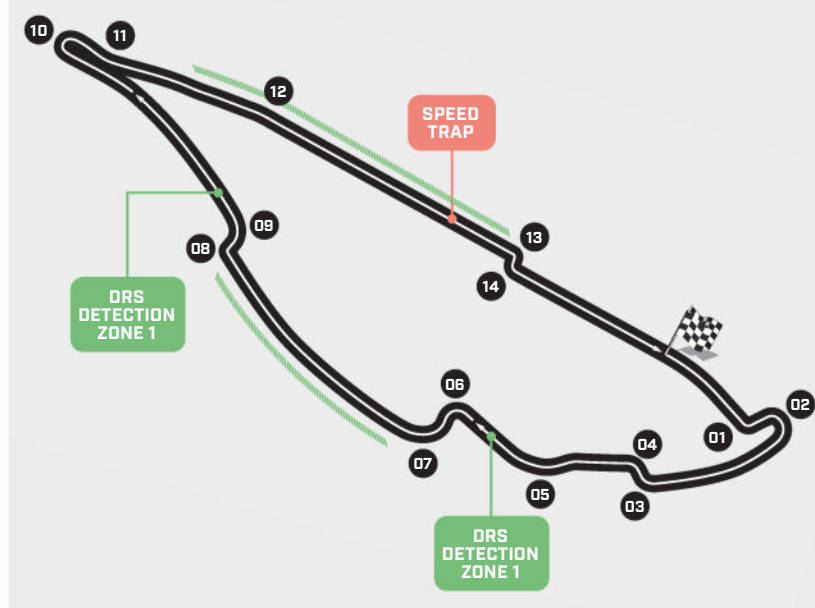
The city skyline across the St Lawrence River is just one backdrop to Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve



CANADIAN GP



F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 10



RACE DATA

Venue	Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve
First GP	1978
GPs held	43
Circuit length	2.710 miles
Number of laps	70
Race distance	189.686 miles
Race lap record	1m13.078s Valtteri Bottas (2019)
Pole lap record	1m10.240s Sebastian Vettel (2019)
Most wins	Michael Schumacher & Lewis Hamilton 7
Most poles	Michael Schumacher & Lewis Hamilton 6
Most starts	Fernando Alonso 19

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 13 June

Practice 1	1830-1930
Practice 2	2200-2300

Saturday 14 June

Practice 3	1730-1830
Qualifying	2100-2200

Sunday 15 June

Race	1900
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WHERE TO WATCH

Live coverage	Sky Sports F1
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ISLANDS IN THE STREAM

Built on a man-made island originally terraformed for Montreal's Expo 67, the Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve sits perched in the St Lawrence River, surrounded by breezy parkland teeming with all sorts of wildlife. Groundhogs escaping from quieter, greener environs onto the circuit have not been uncommon – just ask Anthony Davidson of his run-in with a furry interloper in 2007.

As a fast, yet tight, circuit punctuated by two low-speed hairpins at the top and bottom, Montreal is no stranger to throwing up strange results – especially if inclement weather intervenes. Turns 1-2 is

a bit of a pinch point, and the rest of the first sector is something of a dance with the walls through the quick, flowing run of corners. The main action epicentre lies at the Turns 13-14 chicane that ends the lap, and afterwards too, if the Wall of Champions (so called for a plethora of shunts involving title winners in the 1999 race) is feeling particularly peckish.

With F1 somewhat awash with US interest, note that Canada has hosted grands prix since the 1960s, at Mosport and Mont-Tremblant before landing on Montreal's Ile Notre-Dame circuit.



PHIPPS/SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2024	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2023	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2022	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2017	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull

LE MANS 24 HOURS

World Endurance Championship
Round 4/8
14-15 June

It's the big one! Amid the stifling homogeneity and choreography of much of modern motorsport, the Le Mans 24 Hours remains the outlier, the one that cannot be tamed. And how better to illustrate that than with the formbook of the past couple of years?

Ferrari's 499P, of course, won the 2023 and 2024 runnings of Le Mans, yet until 2025 the full factory cars had yet to taste victory in any other round of the World Endurance Championship. This season, the red cars arrive at the Circuit de la Sarthe undefeated over the opening three races. So, obviously, that means a nailed-on victory is looming for Aston Martin or Peugeot...

Whatever the result, Le Mans as an event is unbeatable, as the tens of thousands of Brits who catch the ferry from Dover to Calais and then motor down the A28 to their motorsport nirvana will testify. Turn to pages 86 to 109 for our full preview of the 24 Hours.



Porsche leads
 at the start of
 last year's race

ROBERTSON/GETTY IMAGES



Tanak heads to the
 seaside on his way
 to victory in 2024

MCKLEIN

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 6/14
 Rally Italy-Sardinia
 Olbia, Italy
5-8 June

After two rounds on rugged gravel roads close to (or actually in the middle of) the Atlantic Ocean, the World Rally Championship moves to its next event on rugged gravel roads... on an island in the Mediterranean Sea. And the Sardinian round is renowned as one of the toughest challenges of them all.

It's a Toyota 1-2-3 in the standings at the moment, with Elfyn Evans leading the way from Kalle Rovanperä and part-timer Sebastien Ogier, and the last-named is on the entry list for this one. But remarkably, the Japanese marque has just one win to its credit in Sardinia, with Hyundai victorious in six of the past seven runnings of the event.

Is that a good omen for Ott Tänak and reigning champion Thierry Neuville, who sit fourth and fifth respectively in the points? Between them, they have scooped up the wins here over the past three seasons.



Audi was on top
in 2024 running
of the 24 Hours

NÜRBURGRING 24 HOURS

Intercontinental GT Challenge

Round 2/5

21-22 June

The second half of June is nirvana for canvas-homed (or live-stream-square-eyed) aficionados of twice-round-the-clock European sportscar marathons. The week after Le Mans (see left) – and a week before Spa (previewed in next issue) – it's the Nürburgring Nordschleife for a feast of GT3-based action.

This is a big one for the prestige marques of the GT3 realm, and it's Porsche that is on a run of success at the legendary track in the Eifel mountains. Each of the three four-hour rounds of the NLS held to date in 2025 have been won by the 911 GT3-R, two of them with Falken Motorsport and one with Manthey Racing. But Mercedes, Aston Martin and BMW have also featured in the top three.

This race is a proper bucket-lister, and you'll fit in better among the enthusiastic hordes by donning stone-washed denim, as well as the proper 1980s mullet-and-'tache combo.



Single-seater fun in the
Jochen Rindt Trophy

THRUXTON BARC

Thruxton Retro: Jochen Rindt Trophy, FF1600, Ferraris, FISCAR, MGOC, Mighty Minis, GTSCC, Formula Junior
21-22 June

The Thruxton Retro meeting has undergone a major revamp and rebrand for this year, with a host of off-track activities, including live music, a circus and special displays, added to turn it

into a festival-style event for all the family. The on-track action, however, has a familiar feel with the diverse mix of historic single-seaters that feature in the Jochen Rindt Trophy again topping the bill. Further highlights include sportscar offerings from the GT & Sports Car Cup and FISCAR, while Formula Junior and Formula Ford 1600 will also take to the Hampshire speedbowl across the weekend.



BRANDS HATCH AMERICAN SPEEDFEST

Euro NASCAR, Bernie's V8s, Ford vs Chevy, Legends, Pickups

7-8 June

Aslice of the USA is once again transported to Brands Hatch for the 12th edition of the ever-popular American SpeedFest. Euro NASCAR again heads the on-track action, which also includes Legends and Pickups. Mustangs and Corvettes will do battle in the second edition of the Ford vs Chevy contests created by the organisers of the Bernie's V8s series, which is on the bill as well. Things will be loud!

Leafy Road America is a favourite among the IndyCar fraternity



DTM

Round 3/8

Zandvoort, Netherlands

7-8 June

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

Round 3/10

Zandvoort, Netherlands

7-8 June

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

Round 5/13

Wanneroo, Australia

7-8 June

Round 6/13

Hidden Valley, Australia

21-22 June

NASCAR CUP SERIES

Round 15/36

Michigan, USA

8 June

Round 16/36

Mexico City, Mexico

15 June

Round 17/36

Pocono, USA

22 June

INDYCAR

Round 8/16

St Louis, USA

15 June

Round 9/16

Road America, USA

22 June

INDY NXT

Round 5/12

St Louis, USA

15 June

Round 6/12

Road America, USA

22 June

TCR WORLD TOUR

Round 2/8

Valencia, Spain

14-15 June

Round 3/8

Monza, Italy

21-22 June

F1 ACADEMY

Round 4/7

Montreal, Canada

14-15 June



The DTM makes its traditional trip to the dunes of Zandvoort

ADAC MOTORSPORT

THRUXTON BARC

BTCC, Porsche Carrera Cup GB, British F4, Mini Challenge Trophy
7-8 June

SILVERSTONE MSVR

Equipe (Formula Libre, GTS, Libre, MG Cup/70s, Sports Racing Cars, Sports Racing Prototypes), Mini Miglia/Se7en, Monoposto, Sports 2000
7-8 June

DONINGTON PARK BRSCC

SuperSport Endurance, Pro Sports Sprint, Audi TTs, ClubSport Trophy, Mazda MX-5s (Championship, SuperCup, Clubman), Production Cup, BMWs (Compacts, 1 Series)
7-8 June

ANGLESEY BRSCC

Fun Cup, Fiestas (Junior, ST240, ST150), CityCar Cup, Pre 99 FF1600
7-8 June

SNETTERTON MSVR

GT Cup, Radical Cup UK, Clubmans, Bell Sport Challenge, Focus Cup, Production GTIs, Snetterton Saloons
7-8 June

MONDELLO PARK MPSC

Boss Ireland, ITCC, Formula Vee, Formula Sheane, Fiestas (STs, Zetecs), Strykers, Future Classics
7-8 June

SHELSLEY WALSH

British Hillclimb Championship **Round 5/14**
7-8 June

MALLORY PARK 750MC

750 Formula, Classic Stock Hatch, Locost, Sport Specials, Type R Trophy
8 June

**OULTON PARK BRSCC**

Northern Saloons/Sports, SEAT SuperCup Ireland, Metros/Classic VWs, C1 Endurance
14 June

CROFT BARC

TCR UK, Civic Cup, Junior Saloons, Caterham Graduates, Track Action
14-15 June

SNETTERTON 750MC

116 Sprint/120 Coupe, 116 Trophy, Calm All Porsche, Clio Sport, F1000, Formula Vee, Hot Hatch, MR2s, Radical Club Challenge, Sports 1000, Swift Sport
14-15 June

SILVERSTONE CSCC

Special Saloons/ Modsports, Open Series, Swinging 60s, Future/ Modern Classics, Jaguars/ MG Trophy, BMWs, Magnificent 7s, Slicks Series, Tin Tops/Pumas, Turbo Tin Tops/ New Millennium
14-15 June

BRANDS HATCH CTA

Racing Hondas
15 June

CADWELL PARK SMRC

Scottish: Mini Coopers, Classic Sports/Saloons, Fiesta STs, C1s
15 June

BRANDS HATCH MSVR

Ferrari Challenge UK
20-22 June

CADWELL PARK VSOC

Vintage and historic racing
21 June

OULTON PARK BARC

BTCC, British F4, Porsche Sprint Challenge GB, Mini Challenge
21-22 June

DONINGTON PARK HSCC

Guards Trophy, Historic FF2000, FF1600 (Classic,

Historic), Roadsports (Historic, 70s), Historic Pre-'66 Saloons, Alfa Romeos/ Italian Intermarque, Griffiths Haig Trophy, BMW CC
21-22 June

DOUNE

British Hillclimb Championship **Round 6/14**
21-22 June

**The greatest seasons in Formula 1 history**

To celebrate 75 years of both Autosport and the F1 world championship for drivers, we're running a new podcast series. Each episode, Chief Editor Kevin Turner interviews a special guest who selects their favourite F1 season. Guests argue why they think their selection is the best and discuss key storylines from those campaigns. Karun Chandhok kicked us off, followed by Marcus Simmons, James Allen and Maurice Hamilton.

[autosport.com/podcast](https://www.autosport.com/podcast)

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LE MANS MONACO GP INDY 500

AUTOSPORT

LE MANS 2025

CAN FERRARI WIN AGAIN?



PLUS

MONACO GP AND
INDY 500 ACTION

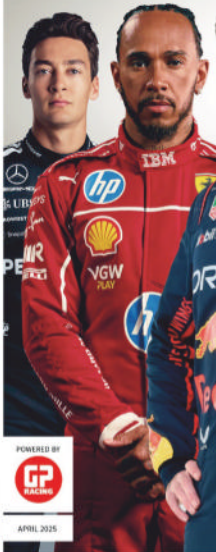
FERRARI'S F1 WOES AND
RED BULL'S RECOVERY

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GP RACING
JULY 2025

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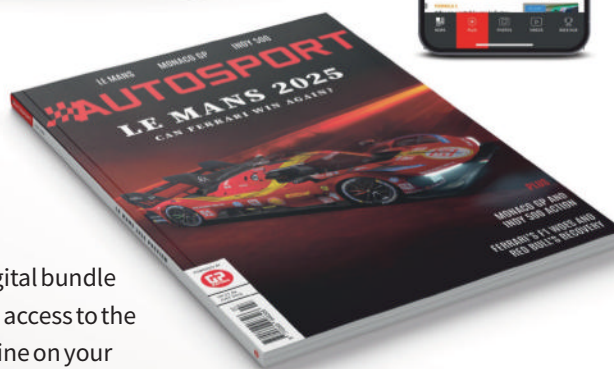
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LE MANS 2000-2009: THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST MOTOR RACE

evropublishing.co.uk

RRP £70

The thing that is particularly impressive about this book is that the John Brooks I know is a superb photographer; it is now revealed that he is also a very fine writer – in this book he contributed all the images *and* the words. To describe the book as 'image rich' would be an understatement: every entrant and every car is captured, nothing is missed. Those photographs taken at dusk and dawn are particularly atmospheric – did Brooks get any proper sleep during any of these races?

The refreshing thing about *Le Mans 2000-2009* is that it is logically laid out in such a way that comparisons between years are easily made. The fact that it is 'The Official History' gives much credence to the book.

The chapters are specific to each of the 10 years covered. Each chapter starts with

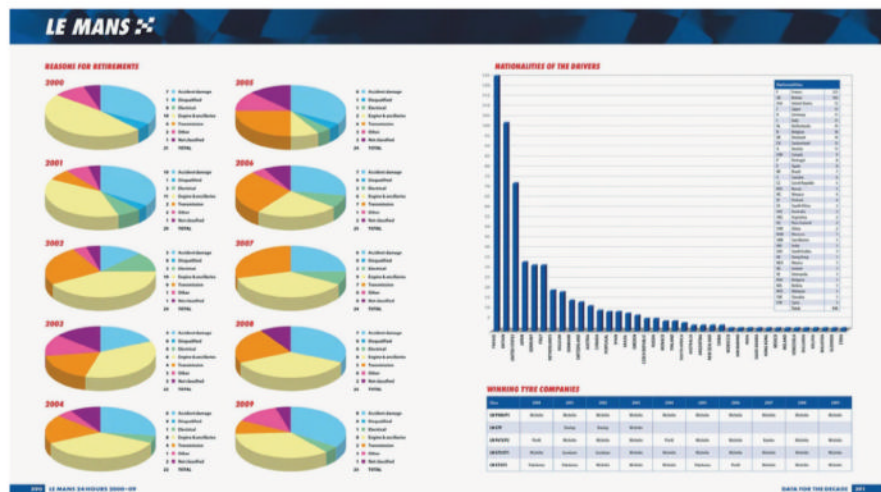
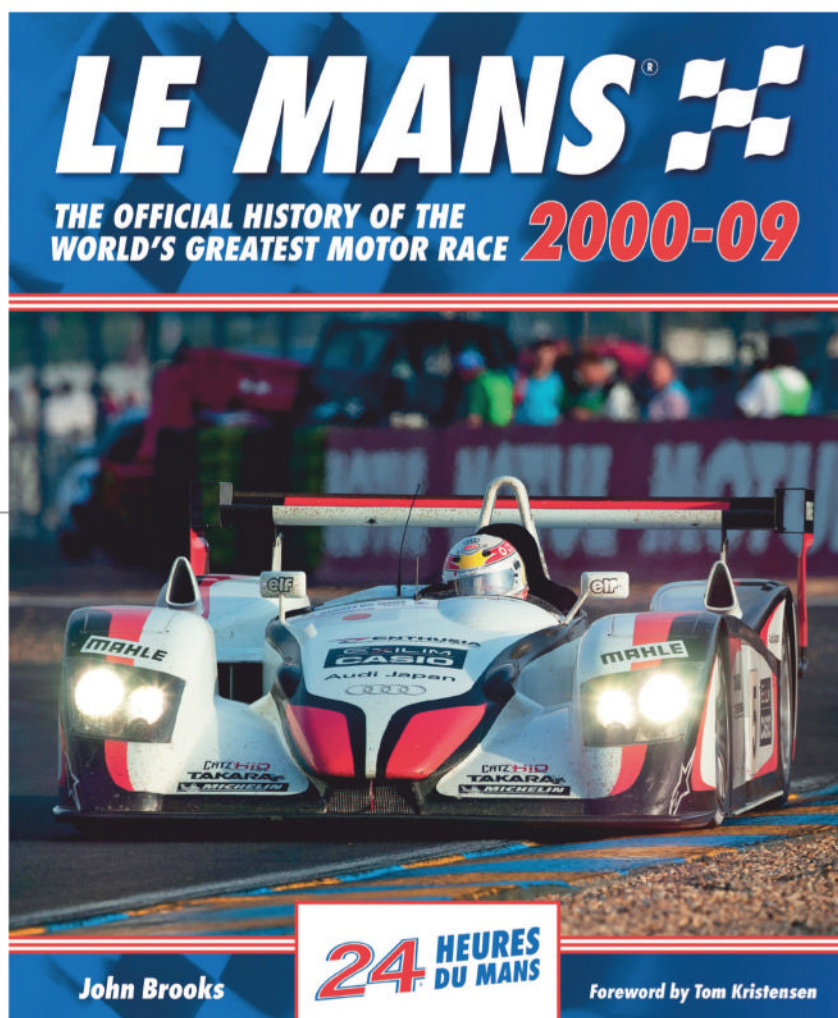
a detailed list of entrants and a brief synopsis of qualifying and the race, followed by a fascinating section on the race organisation, something that continues the good work of the previous volumes. Then we get a breakdown of all the teams, cars and drivers, with comprehensive details of how they performed during the race. Brooks is never afraid to comment on the ill-

prepared or over-ambitious. Each chapter then closes with a table that shows the race position for every starter for each of the 24 hours of the race, after which there is the detailed final race results list and its effect on the various series.

The final chapter 'Data for the decade' lists marque records, with Audi heading the list of winning contenders, but also with single entries for Autoeoxe, Durango, Nasamax, Norma and Debora – hands up any enthusiasts who remember any of those. Driver records cover Christian Abt to Charles Zwolsman, over 540 different drivers, nine of whom competed in all 10 races. There's also info on the fastest cars in the speed trap, fastest race laps, margins of victory, fastest qualifying laps and, what is particularly interesting, reasons for retirement; accident damage followed by engines and ancillaries. Proving my simple rules for winning Le Mans: stay on the road and just put fuel in.

Altogether a very fine piece of work – now of course we will all want 2010 to 2019, particularly at the very reasonable price of £70. The 2000-2009 book will be available at the end of June.

PETER STEVENS (DESIGNER)





FORMULA 1 75 YEARS: AT SPEED WITH THE WORLD'S GREATEST MOTORSPORT

quarto.com
RRP £38

Unless you've been hiding under a rock, or hunkered down with your fingers in your ears because *the FIA Formula 1 World Championship has only been known by that title since 1981, dammit*, you can't have missed the fact that F1's commercial rights holder (and

pretty much everyone else) has been celebrating the 75th anniversary of the first world championship grand prix. Detail-minded readers will be pleased to note this book covers various caveats, including the F2 years and the abortive world championships of the 1920s.

With 75 years and a pre-war preamble to cover, this is a very

substantial tome and is the work of three authors, including *Autosport* senior writer Stuart Codling. Renowned photographer James Mann is responsible for picture selection and captions, while former *GP Racing* associate editor James Roberts contributes sections on each decade's champions, significant cars and defining events.



HOT WHEELS FERRARI COLLECTION

hotwheels.com/ferrari
RRP From £2.30

Hot Wheels is pushing on with its Ferrari partnership and will continue to 'drop' new releases throughout 2025. First out of the blocks is a limited edition Hot Wheels Collector set featuring a die-cast 1:64-scale 312 P (the first Ferrari to be depicted in the Hot Wheels range) and the Hypercar-derived 499P Modificata. Slightly less rarefied, and being released from June onwards, are the 1:64-scale SF90 Stradale, F40 Competizione, and 365 GTB4 Competizione.



Also available from June is the 1:64-scale radio-controlled SF90 Assetto Fiorano RC, compatible with all Hot Wheels track sets. Coming later in the year, and available at nationwide dealers, are the Premium F50 and LaFerrari, along with the fabulous-looking 250 GTO & Fiat 642 RN2 transporter. In period, Ferrari had two Fiat 642 RN2s built up as race car transporters by the Forlì-based coachbuilder Bartoletti. All the Hot Wheels Premium models feature full die-cast bodies and chassis with Real Riders wheels.



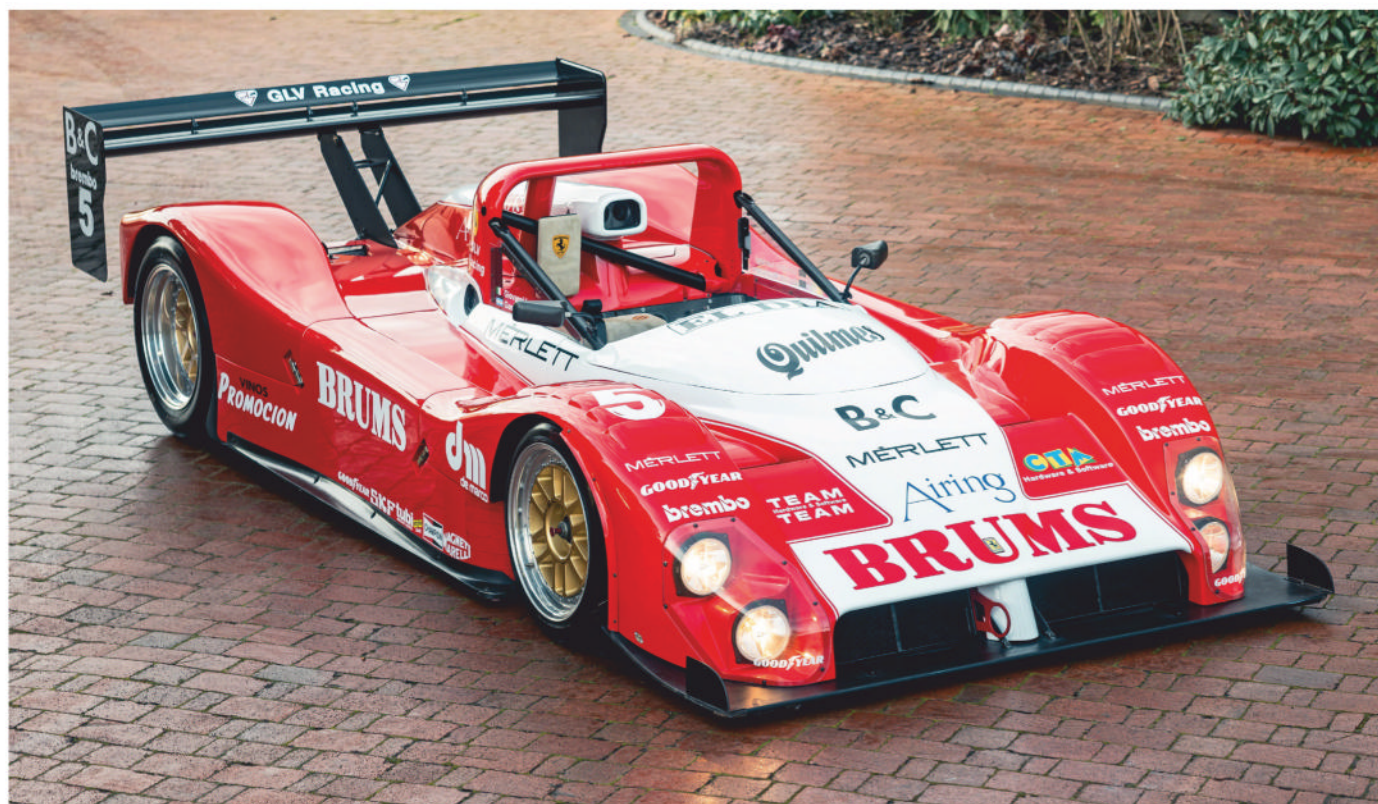
ORIENT STAR LAYERED SKELETON LIMITED EDITION

orientwatch.co.uk
RRP £829

Summer is coming and, with it, Japanese watch brand Orient Star has introduced two new models, one of which is a limited-edition piece, bringing a flavour of the seaside to its Layered Skeleton series. The new regular model aims to evoke coastal sunshine with its champagne gold-coloured dial and grey calf leather strap. Adding a Mediterranean feel to the range, the 700-piece limited-edition model has a mint green dial "reminiscent of a fresh breeze over a blue ocean", says the manufacturer.

STAR CARS FOR SALE

*Wondering how to spend that lottery win this month?
Here are the cars we'd be thinking of adding to the collection*



1994 FERRARI 333 SP

The 499P has successfully taken the works Ferrari team back to the top class of sportscar racing, but the 333 SP went some way to filling the gap between the 1973 312PB and the current Le Mans Hypercar. Originally designed in partnership with Dallara, the 333 SP was meant for privateer use and ran a four-litre V12 derived from the engine that powered Ferrari's 641 Formula 1 car of 1990. The 333 SP arrived in 1994 and remained active for nearly a decade, scoring successes on both sides of the Atlantic. This chassis, 003, appeared at the 1994 Geneva Motor Show before being delivered to Scandia Motorsport. It won at Laguna Seca and then took the 1995 Sebring 12 Hours, with Andy Evans, Eric van de Poele and Fermin Velez

at the wheel. Another win followed at Phoenix, Velez going on to take the IMSA drivers' crown. The car subsequently received designer Tony Southgate's updates and contested the 1996 Le Mans 24 Hours, where it ran out of fuel. The peak of chassis 003's career came in 1997 when it won the Sebring 12 Hours for a second time, with Stefan Johansson and Yannick Dalmas this time joining Evans and Velez, just weeks after taking the runner-up spot at Daytona. The car later raced in the Sports Racing World Cup, in which it was also a winner. After briefly running with a Judd V10, 003 now has its original V12.

tinyurl.com/3m9hm44d





1991 JAGUARSport XJR-15

If the BMW M1 Procar championship was the greatest one-make series, then the 1991 Jaguar Intercontinental Challenge runs it close, at least for spectacle. Derived from Jaguar's successful Group C racers, the XJR-15 project was led by Tom Walkinshaw, with Peter Stevens designing the bodywork. The carbon-composite car was powered by a six-litre V12 producing 450bhp. Although intended for road use, 16 special race cars were prepared for the Jaguar Intercontinental Challenge, including this one. Originally purchased by Lee Kun-Hee, chassis 048 contested all three events and won the Silverstone race driven by Juan Manuel Fangio II. Fangio's prize was a Jaguar XJR-S, which – remarkably – is offered alongside the XJR-15!

tinyurl.com/2tr9ejrb

1970 FERRARI 365 GTB/4 COMPETIZIONE DAYTONA

The competition version of the Ferrari Daytona was a frontrunner in the GT class in the first half of the 1970s. It racked up three consecutive category wins at the Le Mans 24 Hours in customer hands, each time finishing in the top six overall. Chassis 13855 was converted into Group 4 specification by Sport Auto Modena in 1972 for the official US Ferrari importer Luigi Chinetti's North American Racing Team, under the supervision of the Ferrari Factory Assistenza Sportiva. As one of three NART Daytonas entered at Le Mans in 1972, this 4.4-litre, V12-powered car came home ninth overall and fifth in the GTS.0 class in the hands of Jean-Pierre Jarier and Claude Buchet.

tinyurl.com/f24fntz7



2019 JAGUAR D-TYPE

No, the above year isn't a typo; this is one of 25 factory-built continuation models by Jaguar Classic, built to complete the originally intended production run of D-types. After arriving in 1954, the D-type took a hat-trick of Le Mans wins from 1955, including scoring a 1-2-3-4-6 in 1957. A fire at Jaguar's Browns Lane factory in early 1957 destroyed nine chassis and halted construction so, in 2018, Jaguar used original blueprints to finish the planned production run. This car was built to 1956 'long nose' specification and has a 3.4-litre version of the legendary straight-six XK engine, similar to that used in the D-type's first two Le Mans victories.

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Lewis's peace of the inaction

Lewis Hamilton is a vision of calm contemplation in the cockpit of his McLaren as he composes himself awaiting the start of qualifying for the 2010 Japanese Grand Prix. The session had been repeatedly delayed due to very heavy rain, Hamilton remaining in the car throughout, and when conditions failed to improve was postponed until race-day morning. What Autosport described as “a heroic effort” on “a typically dramatic and skilful lap” got the then one-time world champion to within 0.38 seconds of the front-row dominating Red Bulls of Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber, although a gearbox change meant a five-place grid drop.

Photographer Steven Tee/
Getty Images

Where Suzuka, Japan

When Saturday 9 October 2010



Piquet couldn't stop Prost from successfully defending his crown

FEDER/GETTY IMAGES

Perfect Prost takes F1's greatest title showdown

30 October 1986

The Williams-Honda FW11 was *the* Formula 1 car of 1986. It took nine wins and 11 fastest laps from 16 races, easily enough for Williams to take the constructors' crown. But – and take note of this Lando Norris, Oscar Piastri and McLaren – Nigel Mansell and Nelson Piquet split the points between them, allowing Alain Prost to keep himself in contention with one of the finest campaigns in F1 history.

Mansell headed to the Australian Grand Prix finale in Adelaide as favourite. Prost and Piquet needed to win and even then, third would be enough for 'Red 5'. Mansell duly beat Piquet to pole, with Prost in fourth, 1.3 seconds behind. Mansell made a fine start, only to be demoted by Ayrton Senna's Lotus, which then lost out to Piquet – all on the first lap! It was just the beginning of a race that Autosport said made for "sensational viewing".

Piquet led until lap seven of the 82 when Keke Rosberg – up from seventh in his McLaren – swept past. The Finn knew he was in his last F1 race and pulled confidently away from Piquet, Prost and Mansell. When Piquet spun under pressure from Prost, the



Mansell was favourite ahead of season finale

Frenchman moved into second and leader Rosberg had already vowed to help his team-mate. But Mansell was third, where he needed to be.

Then, on lap 32, Prost suffered a right-front puncture and was forced to pit. That dropped him to fourth but turned out to be a

blessing in disguise as the other frontrunners attempted to go through the race without a pitstop (as was then allowed). The Goodyear technicians were pleasantly surprised by the condition of Prost's other three tyres, so a non-stop strategy looked good...

Mansell got held up in traffic and didn't fight too hard when Piquet made a lunge for second; third was enough – and Rosberg was still well down the road.

Prost was now flying and catching his Williams rivals but was concerned that he was using too much fuel. "In an ordinary race I would have backed off until it had come back on the right side again – maybe settled for a safe third," said Prost. "But on a day like this there was no way to back off. I thought, 'OK, maybe I finish, maybe I don't – but if I don't win the race, I don't win the championship', so there was no point in backing off."

Everything began to change just after three-quarters distance. First, Rosberg retired from the lead when a tyre failed. At almost the same moment, Prost took Mansell for second – and then it happened. Mansell's left-rear tyre burst spectacularly down the Dequetteville Terrace straight on lap 64. He battled to keep control of the snaking Williams, which he did, but his race was over. If Prost or Piquet won, they would now snatch his crown.

Goodyear suggested that Piquet, leading by 3s, come in for tyres. He did so, handing the advantage to Prost. With 16 laps to go, the Williams was 16.9s behind the McLaren. Piquet, whose old tyres were found to be in fine condition, set several fastest laps, but could make little impression on Prost until the leader backed off in the closing moments. Prost took the flag 4.2s ahead to beat Mansell to the title by two points, becoming the first driver to retain the crown since Jack Brabham in 1960.

"This championship means more to me than last year's because I truly did not believe we could beat the Williams-Hondas this year," said Prost.

KEVIN TURNER



SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES



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Seymour Distribution Ltd,
2 East Poultry Avenue,
London, EC1A 9PT.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.
Printed by Acorn Web Offset Ltd,
Loscoe Close, Normanton Industrial
Estate, Normanton WF6 1TW.
ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport is
published monthly by Motorsport
Network Media UK Ltd, 2 Stephen
Street, London W1T 1AN.

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Trading as Motorsport Network
Media UK Ltd. Publishing, trade
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Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X,
is published monthly by Motorsport
Network Media UK Ltd, 2 Stephen
Street, London W1T 1AN, United
Kingdom. Air freight and mailing in
the USA by World Container Inc.,
150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY
11413, USA. Periodicals postage
paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256.
Subscription records maintained at
Motorsport Network Media UK Ltd,

2 Stephen Street, London W1T 1AN.
Air Business Ltd is acting as our
mailing agent. Postmaster: Send
address changes to Autosport, Air
Business Ltd, c/o World Container
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